

● Planning an extended trip ● Tent and synthetic sleeping bag surveys

# Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



Spring (Oct-Dec) 2006, no 102 \$7.99\* incl GST www.wildmag.com.au



● 'Tiger Walker' Alex Colley profile ● Walking the Sunshine Coast hinterland  
● Rambling in the Victorian Alps ● WA's Cape Le Grand National Park



# SuperLight Tents and Bivys

The SuperLight series has been designed to offer dependable protection in most conditions while weighing 2.5 kg or less. Proven designs are combined with EPIC by Nextec and SilNylon technologies to create a line of tents offering the ultimate in lightweight, packable and breathable tents.

When weight and space are crucial, Black Diamond's SuperLight tents offer a better balance of what a user needs in a somewhat drier, non-torrential down pour and moderate snow conditions. That said, today's cutting edge alpinists have applauded the SuperLight's performance on big alpine climbs such as K7 and Mt Huntington.



## EPIC Fabric by Nextec

EPIC by Nextec<sup>®</sup> is constructed by silicone-encapsulating individual fibres, making it breathable and extremely lightweight. EPIC offers better protection than DWR-treated fabrics that wash out over time and is more breathable than PU coatings or PTFE laminates including Gore-Tex, Conduit SL and Pertex<sup>®</sup>. EPIC is excellent for use in tents when heavy condensation is an issue and during rain and snow showers.

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## Guiding Light (NEW) 2.44 kg, 4 person



## Lighthouse 1.45 kg, 2 person



## Firstlight 1.22 kg, 2 person



## Lightsabre Bivy 639 g, 1 person



## Winter Bivy 277 g, 1 person



Model	Capacity (persons)	Weight w/poles	Packaged Weight w/poles	Area SQ Metre	Dimensions L*W*H	No of Poles	Doors	Vestibule Style	Canopy	Floor
Guiding Light	4	2.44 kg	—	4.35	218x206x187 cm	5 DAC Featherlite	2	Clip On	EPIC	SilNylon
Skylight	3	1.88 kg	—	3.4	224x175x130 cm	3 DAC Featherlite	1	—	EPIC	SilNylon
Lighthouse	2	1.45 kg	1.71 kg	2.85	221x130x109 cm	3 DAC Featherlite	1	Clip On	EPIC	SilNylon
Firstlight	2	1.22 kg	1.49 kg	2.54	208x123x107 cm	2 DAC Featherlite	1	Clip on	EPIC	SilNylon
Lightsabre Bivy	1	639 g	830 g	1.9	228x94x64 cm	2 DAC Featherlite	1	—	EPIC	SilNylon
Winter Bivy	1	277 g	280 g	1.3	208 x 84 cm	0	1	—	EPIC	EPIC

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It has an electronically controlled feature that automatically switches the light to 'Power Save' when only 15% of battery capacity remains, ensuring hours more light – no unpleasant and annoying surprises.

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SILVA L2

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SILVA L3

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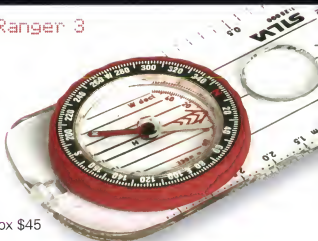
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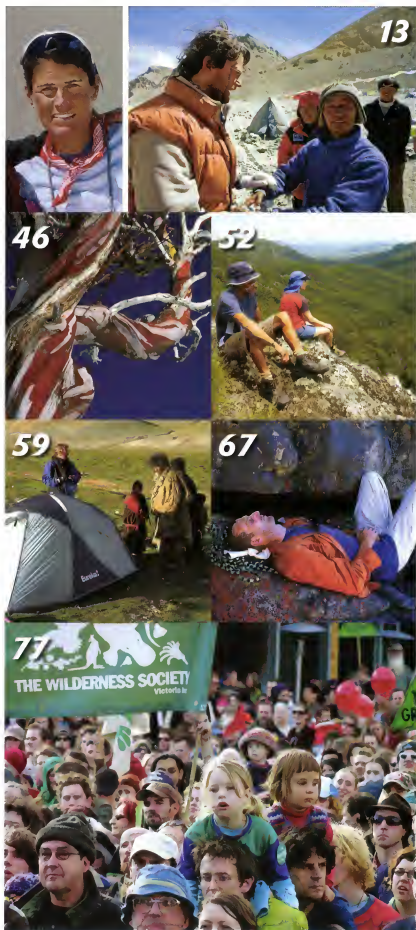
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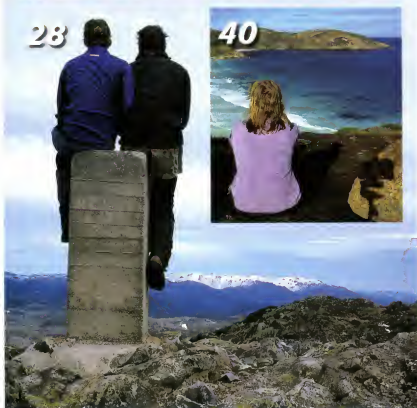


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**Wild**  
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#### WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover Michael Hampton gets himself together after a cold winter crossing of Thura River, Croajingolong National Park, Victoria.  
*Greg Calire*



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# Tell us what you want, what you really, really want

You did...

ONE OF THE MOST SURPRISING FINDINGS FROM the recent readership survey was the number of people who completed it! The web-based version was obviously very popular: the number of responses we received was more than double that of 2002's survey. This feedback is very valuable to us, as are all the ideas and suggestions. Thank you!

So, who are you? It shouldn't be a surprise to hear that the typical *Wild* reader is very active, with 77 per cent of you bushwalking regularly. (Canoeing/kayaking was the next most popular pastime, with more than half of you getting out on the water at least occasionally.) You're also a loyal and generous bunch: 85 per cent of you buy every issue, with 72 per cent having done so for more than three years, and a whopping 73 per cent share your copy with at least one other reader—just don't let 'em crinkle the pages... You're also overwhelmingly male: 80 per cent of respondents attested to this, as did a number of suggestions such as 'more photos of girls in that slinky long underwear!' More than half of you earn your crust in a professional role, with that crust belonging to some kind of fancy sourdough rather than 'Mighty White' as your annual income is more than \$50 000. Readers come from all around Australia although predominately from Victoria (36 per cent) and New South Wales (25 per cent).

Most importantly to us, you like *Wild*! This year's report card was very positive, with 44 per cent of you saying that *Wild* has improved over the last few years and only one per cent believing that it has deteriorated. This went some way towards neutralising the suggestion for the single best change to improve the magazine: 'Get Baxter back!' You're generally pleased with the magazine's contents, with between 68 and 87 per cent agreeing that our coverage of equipment, gear surveys, conservation, outdoors news and destinations is good or very good. The amount of detail in feature articles is 'about right' (89 per cent) and only six per cent of you believe that the subjective ratings in our gear surveys are unreasonable. A typical *Wild* reader's gear-freak tendencies come out in a number of places such as selecting the Gear Surveys, Equipment and Reviews as three of the four most popular departments. Bushwalking articles and track notes for Australian locations are the features of choice, followed by overseas trekking and historical pieces. Conservation articles are fourth in popularity, a heartening sign given our strong environmental focus.

Possibly the most valuable part of the survey for us is the popularity (and the opposite!) of hypothetical changes to the magazine. Of these, the one greeted most enthusiastically was the idea of more Track Notes, with three-quarters of you agreeing that this would make *Wild* more valuable. We'd love to increase the number of these in each issue but we have one small problem: if we did, we'd soon run out of material! Track Notes are hard to come by these days: if you want to see more of them, perhaps you'd consider writing up your latest walk? How-to articles and bound-in guidebooks are also very popular and we'll work to increase the number of these.

Other proposed changes range from the humorous to the helpful, with one of the most common suggestions being one of the hardest: it appears you want more. Bimonthly publication seems to satisfy some, while the requirements for a weekly magazine would kill me by the age of thirty! Not surprisingly, cheaper subscription prices and subscriber give-aways are also very popular, with the success of the headtorch subscription deal in *Wild* no 101 backing this up. All the comments are valuable (with one possible exception regarding topless women), from those suggesting 'a little more fun', to a stronger environmental stance, to compliments such as: 'It is Australia's best magazine.'

As I continually emphasise, improving *Wild* is an ongoing business and one in which this survey's results should be noticeable for years to come. One area in which an immediate change can be seen was also suggested by many readers: the upgrade of our web site to make it secure, and more user-friendly, informative and interesting. We've been working on the site for months and it looks fantastic. By the time you read this, a secure web site incorporating a shopping cart, secure pay and fun features should be up and running. Visit [www.wild.com.au](http://www.wild.com.au) to check it out. 🍌

Megan Holbeck

[editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

## The lucky few

Three readers won prizes for completing the readership survey and giving us valuable feedback: Sarah Cranmer received the Nite watch from Macson Trading, David Wakeham won the Ezdri Vacuum Packaging System and Graham Easterby won the Ezdri Snackmaker, both from Hillmark.

# Taking tents to the next level

The Salewa Sierra Leone was the first dome tent in the world and has been a classic amongst Australian bushwalkers for over 20 years due to its strength, simplicity, roominess and waterproofing.

Salewa brought out a new tent last year that is based on the principles of the Sierra Leone but uses new technologies and design to reduce weight. With Australian bushwalkers on the design team, this new model takes hiking tents to the next level!

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# The scourge of the nation?

'Bowel towel', weeds and portly urban cowboys

WHEN I STARTED DRIVING A FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE vehicle in the bush your Editor described my creed as 'portly urban cowboys' and, living in Melbourne and being somewhat overweight, I took exception to being called a 'cowboy'...it wasn't until 1981 that I purchased a four-wheel-drive vehicle, joined a club and began to take an interest in the environment rather than where I was driving...I began to take notice of environmental issues, with a special interest in the prevalence of blackberry and other pest plants growing unchecked in national parks.

Over recent years...I have noted that there isn't obvious work being undertaken to address the problem of pest plants...I note the Minister's glee as he excluded the mountain cattlemen but he has left a vacuum in that the lack of fire has allowed the growth of many grasses that have stifled such plants as the alpine marsh marigold.

So here we are in 2006 with a Victorian State Election being held on 25 November and there don't seem to be any voices raised in condemnation of the lack of positive management in our national parks. Within the period of my interest in the Victorian Alps, John Cain, Joan Kirner, Jeff Kennett and Steve Bracks have all had one theme: there isn't money allocated for very good land management...

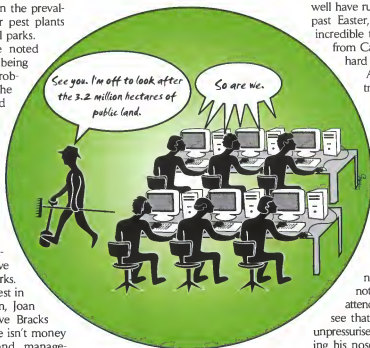
A comparison of the Victorian National Parks annual reports for 1983 and 2005 (after CPI adjustments are made) shows that the cost of administering the public's land in 2005 was less than \$21 a hectare compared with more than \$25 in 1983. While staff numbers have increased from 115 to 625 in the area of administration, people... working in national parks have only risen from 272 in 1983 to 396 in 2005. Meanwhile, the 985 000 hectares of the public's land in 1983 are now 3.2 million hectares.

...why are your subscribers so quiet when they see natural land being so badly degraded?...I, a portly, rural, hypoid greenie, believe that the time has come to get rid of the overadministered, negative-work land management...

John Cribbes  
Sale, Vic

Date roll, bog roll, poo paper, crap wrap, bowel towel: call it what you will, it's becoming the scourge of the nation. On our recent travels across Australia we were sur-

prised by how clean the roadsides were—possibly the anti-litter campaigns are working, or with air-conditioned cars no one winds down the windows any more. But wherever you stop the car, unless it's civilised enough to have a dunny, you'll find toilet paper. It's at any car park, lookout and the start of every walking track: you only have to step behind the first bush for a slash and it's there!



I'd like to call on land managers...to consider including a further note on their mostly excellent signs...to this effect: '(Ladies?) Please take your toilet paper with you.' (I'm sure it's ladies because rarely are there skid marks on the paper!) Honestly, it doesn't take much to have a rubbish bag in the car and those two little squares really don't smell.

While you're at it, you could also pick up a few cigarette butts. For some strange reason we currently don't seem to consider toilet paper or cigarette butts as litter. Perhaps the 'Leave nothing but footprints' sign is too subtle...

It would be even more surprising for those people off to spend a penny if they encountered a discreet little sign behind that first bush where everyone goes. Perhaps: 'Yes, everyone else pees here too but you can't tell because they took their toilet paper with them.'

To some people it might be reassuring to find evidence that it's an okay place to pee and they weren't the first. But the attraction of wild places is that you can have the feel-

ing that you were the first person there and this feeling shouldn't be diminished by the presence of loo paper.

Stephen Bunton  
Mt Stuart, Tas

## Be alert but not alarmed...

I thought that you might be interested to hear about a recent experience that could well have ruined a fantastic adventure. This past Easter, three friends and I spent an incredible ten days mountain-bike touring from Canberra to Mt Kosciuszko...the hard way!

As we were all experienced off-track adventurers, many enjoyable months were spent poring over maps, planning routes and logistics, and we believed that we had left nothing to chance. At the luggage check-in at Brisbane Airport late on Easter Thursday afternoon, my companion and I dutifully declared our trusty MSR Whisperlite stove to the luggage attendant and were told to present it for inspection. Having travelled domestically and internationally with the same stove I was not alarmed, and presumed that the attendant would take a quick look to see that it was indeed clean, empty and unpressurised. However, after literally inserting his nose inside the fuel canister, I was told that due to residual smell, the stove could not fly!

No amount of argument or even offering to fill the entire canister with water would change his mind. As we had been dropped off at the airport, the only solution was for me to walk down the busy road away from the airport carrying my bright red fuel canister and stove, and...inconspicuously hide it in a garden until our return two weeks later! An emergency phone call to our contact in Canberra got us a cheap substitute stove five minutes before the shops closed for the Easter break. However, we had a very nervous wait in Brisbane Airport...expecting to be arrested as terror suspects for hiding a suspicious red bottle in the garden! Telling others of this experience has uncovered similar stories from...recent months.

Could *Wild* possibly do an article on the correct protocol for travelling with various stoves?...my enquiries to the various airlines have not been very productive. (See box on page 93 of *Wild* no 100, Editor)

...Thanks for a high-quality magazine that continues to provide inspiration and relief be-

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tween trips to the bush. (By the way, the stove was still in its hiding spot when we returned.)  
Nick Willis  
Sunshine Coast, Qld

This is to provide an update on the status of the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) for snow activities and to clarify some rumours that you may have read in Info in *Wild* no 100 (Rod Costigan keeps us in the loop)... Mr Costigan has not spoken to any of the AAS management team for more than a year and, as such, the extent to which the article is keeping us 'in the loop' is questionable. To our knowledge Mr Costigan has acquired several funding contracts and government documents through Freedom of Information requests. That he doesn't have knowledge of the discussions among the project steering committee, the Outdoor Recreation Council (ORC) committee of management or any of the working groups leaves clear gaps in his ability to explain this project.

Industry and government in Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland are in various stages of developing their versions of the AAS. Some are in draft stage, while some are merely discussing the option...these processes are independent of the process in Victoria so the extent to which the AAS are adopted in these States is entirely based upon the fact that industry-developed standards are a preferable model to government regulation...

Regarding Mr Costigan's comments on the snow AAS: the original plan for snow activities was to split them into disciplines such as downhill, Nordic and snowboarding. The working group (including ski patrol, ski-touring leaders, police search and rescue and APSI...) decided that the AAS are more likely to be relevant and useful by addressing the environment rather than the discipline.

At that stage, the AAS project responded to the requests from the working group and developed a resort-based AAS and a non-resort-based AAS. The resort-based AAS is currently in draft 2.4 and...has been delayed for several reasons, one of which was a request that the Australian Ski Areas Association have a greater level of involvement in the consultation process...

Inherently, it was agreed that much of the content for the non-resort AAS would reflect the content of the finalised Bushwalking AAS. As the consultation for that AAS took longer than expected, the non-resort AAS was also delayed. It is currently with our lawyers...and will be released as soon as possible.

Gordon Duff  
Outdoor Recreation Centre Victoria Inc  
Viewbank, Vic

#### Share the love!

I'd just like to say how much I enjoyed Quentin Chester's article in *Wild* no 101 (The Wild Life) and draw some parallels. I first met my wife when we were both completing a one-year course in adventure education in the English Lake District. She had been

working in Nigeria and I had been living in France. At the end of the course we moved to Tasmania and soon after our travels diminished as we began a family.

Now our daughters have left home we are free to adventure again. In July we are doing a three-week tour in our double sea kayak around the Whitsundays and in August-September, seven weeks of kayaking and trekking in Zaskar and Ladakh, northern India.

Hey Quentin, you're quite right, life begins (again) at fifty.

John Wilde  
Narrabundah, ACT

I read the article by Greg Powell on his Great North Walk (GNW) trek with a great deal of interest (Track Notes, *Wild* no 100). It was brilliant in its ability to portray the track as it really is in just those few short pages.

Greg has managed to convey the essence of this bushwalking track linking...Sydney and Newcastle without going overboard, highlighting its diversity, its magnificent features, and providing some great advice on what you might expect...on different sections of the walk.

More importantly, your magazine has published his experience and enabled it to be shared with others of like mind. I was even surprised by the article's heading 'THE GREAT NORTH WALK' as it is so typical of the track signage...found at main entry and exit points throughout the GNW, right down to the font now used...

The only point that I would like to bring to your attention...is that...the GNW is now managed by the New South Wales Department of Lands, Soil Conservation Service, not the Department of Land & Water Conservation as is indicated on the current map kits and in the article...Unfortunately, these contact details changed with the last State election...but remain on the existing map-kit stock until a revision is completed... (to be in as little as two months—August 2006).

To obtain a Great North Walk discovery kit...you can contact the NSW Department of Lands by phoning (02) 9236 7720, or the Newcastle Visitor Information Centre: phone (02) 4974 2999.

Well done on a great magazine.

Pete Corrigan  
Newcastle, NSW

I'm an intrepid walker and a keen fan of your magazine; I hang out for my copy to come in the mail, checking the letterbox with hope every time the magazine is due. I would like to make a suggestion though, as of late I have found that the magazine has been lacking Track Notes for quality walks of four or more days in the Victorian Alps...I would once again like to thank you for publishing this outstanding magazine.

James Taylor  
Glen Iris, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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**Burn Time:** 120 hours (HyperBright on low setting)  
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**IPX Waterproof Standard:** 4

**Bulb Type:** 1 HyperBright 1-watt LED  
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**Battery Power:** 3 AAA included

**Constant Illumination?:** No

**Electronics for Brightness Settings?:** Yes



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# Vale Sue Fear

*Tim Macartney-Snape remembers a friend and an inspirational climber*

Before Sue Fear set out on her final expedition to Manaslu (8156 metres) in the Ghorla Himal of central Nepal in April 2006, she was already Australia's most accomplished female high-altitude mountaineer (see profile in *Wild* no 74). This was to be her sixth major Himalayan summit. This feat was all the more remarkable considering she took to high-altitude mountaineering at 33 years of age—relatively late—and that she preferred to go about the difficult business of organising expeditions in an independent fashion, eschewing the modern trend of joining commercial expeditions. Women mountaineers are less common in countries like Nepal, China, Pakistan and Bolivia and don't normally lead their own trips, which added to Fear's challenge. Her determination and competence were an inspiration, especially to other women.

Fear grew up at St Ives in Sydney's north, the middle sibling between two brothers. She showed enthusiasm for the outdoors by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, for which she later became an enthusiastic ambassador, and completed her outdoors induction with an Outward Bound course.

Fear was a measured and cautious mountaineer, never pushing her limits beyond a bold but calculated level. She wouldn't shy from turning back within reach of a summit because of hazardous conditions. Her slightness belied her tenacity and she was capable of astonishing feats of endurance: these qualities were drawn on deeply on several of her highest summits. It isn't easy, physically or psychologically, to retreat from high on a mountain, regather at the bottom and decide to go all the way back up again, yet Fear did this on several mountains including Manaslu.

Fear and her climbing partner Bishnu Gurung reached the summit of Manaslu by mid-morning of 28 May this year. As is typical for morning conditions in late

spring, stormy weather was building. The pair made haste down the sharp summit ridge, keen to get back to their high camp beyond the wide plateau of névé, a notoriously difficult feature to navigate in white-out conditions. Fear had just taken the lead when she broke through

ing news of the accident to the outside world.

Fear put the fame gained from climbing the North Ridge of Mt Everest in 2003 to good use. She gave numerous lectures at schools in order to inspire young people to explore their bound-



*Climbers somewhere in the vicinity of Camp Three (6950 metres) on Manaslu, the peak on which Fear died. **Below left**, Manaslu seen from above Base Camp. **Below right**, Sue Fear (third from left) at Manaslu Base Camp before her attempt on the peak. All photos Sue Fear collection*

the crust of a hidden crevasse, plunging head first into its frozen darkness. Gurung arrested her fall and secured the rope but was unable to get a response from Fear. He finally deduced she was unconscious: for more than two hours he tried to pull her out, in vain. The weather was deteriorating and Gurung was running out of options when the crevasse edge collapsed, causing the anchor to fail. Fortunately, Gurung was able to jump to safety and make a lonely descent, bring-

aries and was tireless in promoting and raising funds for the Fred Hollows Foundation, which aims to bring modern health care to the people of the Himalayas. In 2005 Fear was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to mountaineering and the community.

However, perhaps her greatest contribution was introducing hundreds of people to the outdoors through her passion, guiding treks to the greater Himalayas and the Andes for World Expeditions,



and alerting the many thousands who heard her story to the possibility of a more challenging path. As a guide Fear was a total professional and a hard taskmaster: she led by example but was passionate about getting her charges to assume more responsibility and showing them the beauty and worth of the mountain world. Over the years she developed a genuine respect and concern for the Himalayan people and had many close friendships with those with whom she worked, winning their respect as an equal—again, a remarkable feat in a world dominated by men.

As well as her love of the outdoors, Fear was always ready to go out on the town. Her enthusiasm for finding a happening bar was unflagging: she was the first to get on the dance floor and inevitably among the last to leave. Her years of looking after groups of trekkers honed her natural tendency to feel responsible for the group she was with; thus her company usually ensured an exceptional but trouble-free outing.

A well-grounded sense of humanity and a strong sense of family shone through in Sue Fear's relationships and she extended this intense loyalty to her many friends. She will be remembered because her approach to life was anchored in love: she lived in a spirited and honourable fashion. Few are lucky enough to have lived with such intensity, integrity and courage.

## Tough Tasmanian traverse

### Roger Chao relates an epic trip

Steven Fordyce and I recently completed an unsupported, midwinter traverse of the Western and Eastern Arthur Ranges including an ascent of Federation Peak—a hard enough task in summer! We carried five weeks' food and full snow and ice gear: this, combined with the short days and harsh conditions, made progress very slow. The deep snow, freezing conditions and poor visibility made it a serious undertaking (the maximum temperature recorded was 4°C) and navigation was difficult as cairns and tracks were buried.

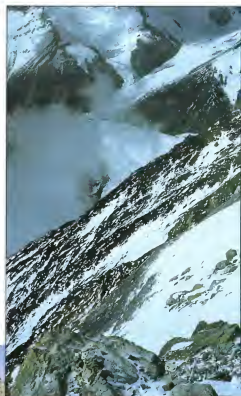
Starting from Scotts Peak Dam, the traverse of the Western Arthur Range took ten days. We waited just below the Devils Thumb until the weather cleared enough to climb Federation Peak, which we down-climbed in the dark with icy water pouring inside our jackets. We were snowed in again for four days before the final effort.

## Himalayan update

### Zac Zaharias reports on successful ascents, attempts and lucky escapes

During the pre-monsoon climbing season in Nepal and Tibet an extraordinary sequence of events unfolded, with Australians in the midst of it all. Mt Everest dominated the news with six Australians (on separate expeditions) reaching the summit. First to summit from the north side was Bob Killip on 15 May along with New Zealanders Mark Whetu (fourth ascent) and Mark Inglis. Conditions were extremely cold with temperatures down to -35°C, causing frostbite to Killip and a number of climbers including Inglis, a double amputee who lost both legs to frostbite on Mt Cook more than 20 years ago.

After Inglis had returned to New Zealand controversy raged worldwide when it was reported that he had climbed past British climber David Sharp when the latter was near death. A debate on the ethics of leaving injured climbers to die ensued, with some media reports labelling mountaineering as '...merely another expression of a consumer society's narcissism' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 2006). Among the media



Lincoln Hall farewelling a Sherpa at Mt Everest Base Camp on 29 May after his rescue from near the summit. Harry Kikstra.

(and some veteran climbers who haven't climbed on the North-east Ridge) the opinion persisted that he could have been rescued, although this flew in the face of the facts that Sharp was frozen, barely alive and in an irretrievable situation. There has never been a rescue from that altitude on the North-east Ridge of a climber unable to walk.

Amidst the debate Lincoln Hall made a dash for Mt Everest's summit after Christopher Harris, the 15-year-old Australian he was guiding, turned around at 7300 metres. Hall reached the summit on 25 May. During the descent he collapsed above the Third Step, apparently suffering cerebral oedema. Sherpas attempted to revive him but he was abandoned in the late afternoon as one of the

Sherpas was going blind. The next morning Dan Mazur, a US climber on his way to the summit, came across a conscious Hall. A massive rescue effort was initiated: for several days 15 Sherpas worked to get him to safety, using 50 oxygen bottles in the process.

Hall's rescue was a joyous moment for all and a reaffirmation of the spirit and determination of mountaineers. Some commentators, ignoring the fact that Hall had walked down with assistance, asked why the same couldn't have been done for Sharp.

Melbourne climber Blair Falahey reached the summit without fanfare on 18 May in the smallest Australian expedition to Mt Everest—just himself and two Sherpas. Paul and Fiona Adler, a husband and wife team climbing as



part of a commercial expedition, attempted to become the first couple to summit Mt Everest together. Paul had to abort two summit attempts while on 23 May Fiona became the third Australian woman to reach the summit.

In retrospect, there were a number of positive aspects to the media reporting. Too often

the reaction of the media to mountaineers is one of two extremes: either they are viewed with unquestioning awe, or as freak shows with dubious sanity. In this case mountaineers quickly countered the initial sensational and inaccurate reporting, a new development that has been conspicuously absent in the past. It is hoped that this new willingness to engage with the media and correct the record will lead to better balance in future media reports.

Amongst the high emotion and drama surrounding the rescue of Hall came the tragic news of Sue Fear's death on Manaslu (see item on page 13). Fear's death is a tragic loss to Australian Himalayan climbing. She was a woman of fierce independence and drive; along with Brigitte Muir she carried the hopes and aspirations of female mountaineers.

Andrew Lock returned to Kangchenjunga (8598 metres) after a failed attempt in 2003. Teaming up with a very experienced international team of seven, with at least 50 8000 metre summits between them, Lock arrived at Base Camp in mid-April. The route was steep and technical, necessitating rope fixing and the establishment of camps at 6050 and 7200 metres. They began their summit bid on 11 May. At Camp Two Lock was struck with severe stomach cramps that persisted over the next few days. Undeterred, he climbed on, pushing through another serac barrier and up steepening snow slopes to Camp Three at 7700 metres, extremely exhausted as he was unable to eat and drink. After a storm abated at 4 am the next day, the team departed.

Progress was slow and frustrating with many false summits, and they finally reached the top at 5 pm in deteriorating weather. The descent during a storm was harrowing. They were lucky to find Camp Three: Joao Garcia, who had retreated earlier, turned on his headlamp just as a break opened in the cloud and this guided the disorientated party in. Lock described this ascent of Kangchenjunga, the second by an Australian, as his most difficult and demanding climb.



*Paul and Fiona Adler at Camp Three on Mt Everest. Paul Adler. Left, looking down the North-east and North Ridges from above the Third Step, at around the altitude where Lincoln Hall was found. Zac Zaharias*

## Australian Rogaining Championships

### Boris Bulkin talks about the big event

The 2006 Australian 24-Hour Rogaine Championships was held in Barkly, north-west Victoria, on 13–14 May. The farmland terrain provided some challenging checkpoints that were fitting for the national championships—accurate and imaginatively placed. Landowners willingly switched off electric fences and allowed the 370 competitors from 166 teams to jump fences and enter the realm of sheep and cattle for the event.

This year's overall winners, Julie Quinn and Karl Strode-Penny, scored a phenomenal 2910 points and covered over 100 kilometres. They were only the second mixed team to win the event in its 27-year history. Overall runners-up and winners of the Men's Open category were Ruhi Afnan, David Nicolson and Steve Cooper with 2720 points, while David Baldwin, David Singleton and Trevor Jacobs were third overall and winners of the Men's Veterans category. Christine Stone and Helen Robinson won both the Women's and Women's Veterans categories, covering over 70 kilometres.

*The 2006 Australian rogaining champions: David Nicolson (left), Ruhi Afnan, Steve Cooper, David Baldwin, David Singleton, Trevor Jacobs, Julie Quinn and Karl Strode-Penny. Boris Bulkin*

Vic Sedunary and Merv Trease bagged the Super Veteran category while Peter Squires, Bill Kennedy and Anne Kennedy travelled from New Zealand to win the Mixed Super Veterans event. Overall Youth winners were brothers Ben and Jon Levine, covering some 60 kilometres in 20 hours. Cousins Catherine and Lucy Phillips won the Youth Women's category.

Australia will host the World Championships in the War-rumbungles, New South Wales, on 13–14 October.



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# Trans Otway Waterfall Walk a step closer

John Piesse reports on the track's progress

Following the opening of the new-look Great Otway National Park in December 2005 (see *Wild* no 100), the Trans Otway Waterfall Walk in coastal south-west Victoria is being promoted by the Otway Ranges Walking Track Association (ORTWA) and VicWalk. Both are campaigning for its inclusion in the park's new management plan.

Conceived and mapped in 1995, the 125 kilometre walk would connect Lorne and Apollo Bay and incorporate 75 kilometres of new track. It would link the Great Ocean Walk west of Apollo Bay to the Surf Coast Walk east of Lorne, providing a continuous walking route between Princetown in the far west of Victoria and Torquay at the eastern end of the Otway Ranges. From coastal views near Apollo Bay and Cumberland River, the walking route moves inland to the forested valleys and ridges of the Otway Ranges hinterland. It would pass 21 waterfalls (only nine have public access at present) and cross 15 streams. The route has been fully identified and sections of it are regularly used by bushwalking clubs. For more information, contact ORTWA secretary, Jackie Carroll, at ki86587@bigpond.net.au

*Frank Parsons and Lina Gamper pose in front of a giant gum tree near Sabine Falls, one of the waterfalls passed on the proposed walk. John Piesse*



## Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181. Email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

### September

**Nightgaine 5 hr R**  
16 September, ACT  
[act.rogaine.asn.au](http://act.rogaine.asn.au)

**FNCCC Northern Marathon Series Race 5 C**  
17 September, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

**Wildwater Yarra Series Race 2 C**  
17 September, Vic  
[www.vic.canoe.org.au](http://www.vic.canoe.org.au)

**LPKC Winter Marathon Series Race 7 C**  
23 September, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

**CuCCC State Marathon Championships C**  
23-24 September, Qld  
[www.vic.canoe.org.au](http://www.vic.canoe.org.au)

**FACC Ted Pace Memorial Race C**  
24 September, Vic  
[www.vic.canoe.org.au](http://www.vic.canoe.org.au)

### October

**Upper Murray Challenge M**  
1 October, Vic/NSW  
[www.uppermurraychallenge.dragnet.com.au](http://www.uppermurraychallenge.dragnet.com.au)

**Metrogaine R**  
1 October, Qld  
[www.qld.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.qld.rogaine.asn.au)

**Schools White-water Championships C**  
7 October, Tas  
[www.tas.canoe.org.au](http://www.tas.canoe.org.au)

**B/12 hr R**  
7 October, Vic  
[www.vic.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.vic.rogaine.asn.au)

**Brisbane Valley 100 Race C**  
7-8 October, Qld  
[www.qld.canoe.org.au](http://www.qld.canoe.org.au)

**Ororau Valley Classic BR**  
8 October, ACT  
[jgharding@bigpond.com](http://jgharding@bigpond.com)

**WBCC Winter Marathon Series Race 8 C**  
11 October, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

**World Championships R**  
13-14 October, NSW  
[www.rogaine2006.com.au](http://www.rogaine2006.com.au)

**Freyinet Lodge Challenge M**  
14-15 October, Tas  
[www.tasultra.org](http://www.tasultra.org)

**Brindabella Classic and Bulls Head Challenge BR**  
22 October, ACT  
[www.coolrunning.com.au](http://www.coolrunning.com.au)

**Wildwater Yarra Series Race 3 C**  
22 October, Vic  
[www.vic.canoe.org.au](http://www.vic.canoe.org.au)

**Hawkesbury Canoe Classic C**  
28-29 October, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

### November

**Northern Marathon Series Race 6 C**  
4 November, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

**Spring 6/12 hr R**  
4 November, ACT  
[act.rogaine.asn.au](http://act.rogaine.asn.au)

**Spring 12 hr R**  
4 November, WA  
[www.wa.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au)

**Bright Four Peaks Race BR**  
4-7 November, Vic  
(03) 5755 1507

**Bay to Beach C**  
5 November, WA  
[www.wa.canoe.org.au](http://www.wa.canoe.org.au)

**Multigaine 3/8 hr R**  
5 November, Qld  
[www.qld.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.qld.rogaine.asn.au)

**Black Mountain Challenge BR**  
10 November, ACT  
[boydfamily@netspeed.com.au](http://boydfamily@netspeed.com.au)

**WBCC Winter Marathon Series Race 8 C**  
11 November, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

**Minigaine 3 hr R**  
11 November, SA  
[www.sa.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.sa.rogaine.asn.au)

**Novalty 6 hr R**  
11 November, Vic  
[www.vic.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.vic.rogaine.asn.au)

**Mt Majura Two Peaks Classic and One Peak Challenge BR**  
18 November, ACT  
[jgharding@bigpond.com](http://jgharding@bigpond.com)

**Socialgaine 6 hr R**  
19 November, NSW  
[www.nsw.rogaine.org](http://www.nsw.rogaine.org)

**Mt Feathertop Ultra BR**  
30 November, Vic  
[www.coolrunning.com.au](http://www.coolrunning.com.au)

### December

**State Championships 8/24 hr R**  
2-3 December, Tas  
[www.tas.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.tas.rogaine.asn.au)

**Wildwater Championships C**  
9 December, Tas  
[www.tas.canoe.org.au](http://www.tas.canoe.org.au)

**Coast to Kosciuszko BR**  
9-11 December, NSW  
[www.coolrunning.com.au](http://www.coolrunning.com.au)

**Black Mountain Challenge BR**  
10 December, ACT  
[boydfamily@netspeed.com.au](http://boydfamily@netspeed.com.au)

**Tour de Mountain BR**  
18 December, ACT  
[www.coolrunning.com.au](http://www.coolrunning.com.au)

**RC Murray Marathon C**  
27-31 December, Vic  
[www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)

### January 2007

**Bogong to Mt Hotham BR**  
7 January, Vic  
[jinda1@bigpond.net.au](http://jinda1@bigpond.net.au)

### February

**Cradle Mountain Run BR**  
3 February, Tas  
[www.cradle.ultraoz.com](http://www.cradle.ultraoz.com)

**Summerdash Marathon C**  
4 February, WA  
[www.wa.canoe.org.au](http://www.wa.canoe.org.au)

**Nelligan Challenge Marathon C**  
24 February, NSW  
[www.nsw.canoe.org.au](http://www.nsw.canoe.org.au)

### March

**Six Foot Track Race BR**  
10 March, NSW  
[www.sixfoot.com](http://www.sixfoot.com)

**Trailwalker Melbourne B BR**  
23-25 March, Vic  
[www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne](http://www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne)

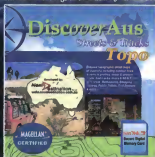
**Activities:** B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multiports, R rogaining  
**Organisations:** CuCCC Cumbrian Creek Canoe Club, FACC Footscray Amateur Canoe Club, FNCCC Far North Coast Canoe Club, LPKC Liff Pili Kayak Club, RC Red Cross, WBCC Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated

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# S C R O G G I N

## Cave closures

Stephen Bunton reports the closure of another cave, Cocklebidy Cave on the Nullarbor Plain, Western Australia. The cave is well-known for its extensive underwater passages, which constitute one of the world's longest cave dives. The cave's entrance is marked on numerous road maps and it is probably one of Australia's most visited wild caves. Part of the cave entrance collapsed due to heavy rains in January and the cave has been deemed unsafe. (The permanent ladder in the entrance has also been removed.) Given that the caves of the Nullarbor are formed or at least enlarged by roof collapse, this is not an unnatural occurrence. Despite the closure, some cavers are still visiting the cave. Also on the Nullarbor, Pannikin Plain Cave and Weebubbe Cave both remain closed after many years.

In future, land managers will need to think more creatively about the options

for accessing caves in the face of the obvious danger posed by these ongoing natural processes. At present it seems as though the easiest solution is to close the caves permanently. The Department of Conservation and Land Management have a wonderful selection of signs in other wild areas, such as on some cliffs and in gorges, which imply that visitors must take some responsibility for their own safety. There are 'Cave Risk' area signs at Cocklebidy and perhaps the warnings posed by these are sufficient? It can always be spelt out more explicitly with 'Enter at your own risk' signs. This would be a more honest reflection of the situation as cavers sneak in, regardless.

*Left, surely a sign such as this one at Cocklebidy would do? Below, despite the closure (and accompanying signs), cavers are still visiting the cave. Stephen Bunton*



## Interstate developments in Adventure Activity Standards

Rod Costigan reports that South Australia has released rebadged and slightly amended copies of the Victorian Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) for eight activities. That makes two States which now have 'bushwalking standards' that recommend teenagers don't walk in a suburban park without an adult leader. This has nothing to do with the Federation of South Australian Walking Clubs, who withdrew from the AAS process some months ago. Like their Victorian counterparts, they will not endorse the AAS Bushwalking. In WA, the Department of Sport & Recreation has announced that it will also follow Victoria.

Meanwhile, the authors of the Victorian AAS, the Outdoor Recreation Centre (ORC), have announced that they still intend to publish AAS-Snow (Resort) but only as a directory of resort facilities, a complete depar-

ture from the AAS concept. This is to accommodate the ski industry, represented by the Australian Snow Areas Association, which opposes any role for the ORC in resort policy.

In January, the Victorian Department of Sustainability & Environment published draft policy that would have made AAS compulsory for associations through compulsory licensing. It has since published assurances that it will not proceed with that policy. However, there is a possibility that land-management authorities in Tasmania may be intending to make AAS compulsory for all.

## Simpson Desert solo crossing

In June Lucas Trihey became the first person since Aboriginal times to walk across the Simpson Desert solo, unsupported and avoiding vehicle tracks. Trihey carried all his supplies in a small, purpose-made cart and took 17 days for the 400 kilometre journey. Starting on the western edge of the desert at East Bore, 30 kilometres north of Old Andado, Trihey

walked east across almost 1000 sand dunes to reach Birdsville. His route took him through the geographical centre of the desert and he chose to travel cross-country, avoiding vehicle tracks and seismic lines. More information and a detailed trip report can be found at [www.escalade.com.au](http://www.escalade.com.au)

## North Pole ticked

An eight-person team led by polar veteran Eric Philips and adventurer Matt McFadyen skied to the North Pole in April. Their team consisted of Louise Allard (who became the first Australian woman to reach the North Pole), Wayne Eaton, Carl Le Souef, Kingsley Brown and twins Dave and Greg Mathew (aka the Logan Twins, recent winners of the 'Big Brother' reality TV programme).

Hazardous ice conditions, unseasonably warm temperatures and persistent negative drift plagued the expedition throughout the eight-day trip: it was the first time in living memory that nearby fiords had not frozen over during winter. The team was forced to cross open leads on ice floes or by strapping two kayaks side by side and skiing across them. The team edged on to the top of the world on 18 April.

## Outward Bound Australia reaches half a century

Foundation Coordinator Zoe Routh reports that more than 200 000 people have attended Outward Bound courses since 1996, overseen by nearly 4000 staff in more than 20 locations across Australia.

Outward Bound is hosting 50th anniversary celebrations in Perth on 15 September, in Melbourne on 12 October and in Sydney on 23 October. A major reunion and events are being hosted in Tharwa, Australian Capital Territory, between 15-17 December. Check the web site [www.outwardbound.com.au](http://www.outwardbound.com.au) for more details.

## Launceston Walking Club's 60th

On 29 November the Launceston Walking Club will celebrate its 60th birthday. A special anniversary dinner will be held in Launceston on 21 October for all members, past and present. Full details about this, and the 43rd wilderness audiovisual show that is to be run in conjunction, will be on the Club's web site at [www.launcestonwalkingclub.org.au](http://www.launcestonwalkingclub.org.au)

## New bushwalking web site for Queensland

Tourism Queensland has recently launched a dedicated bushwalking web site featuring reviews of walks in the State: short and long, desert and coastal; with references, useful links, trip reports and a search index. Visit [www.queenslandwalks.com.au](http://www.queenslandwalks.com.au)

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to [WILD](mailto:WILD), PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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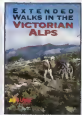
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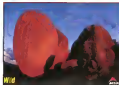
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# Take **it** from me

Secrets of an outdoors insider, by *Quentin Chester*

**HELLO WORLD! BEING AN OUTDOORS EXPERT** I'm sure everyone wants to know the secret of my success but maybe they're too afraid to ask. In fact, I've noticed that if I turn up at a campsite to spread a little wisdom and show off my equipment, people often shy away. It's not easy coming face to face with a legend. Perhaps that's why I gave up shaving. Anyway, to save further embarrassment I have put together my 15 top tips for venturing into our wide, brown land. So listen and learn from someone who's been there and everywhere and done that and so much more.

## 1 Choosing companions

To start with, many bush travellers worry about who should join them for a walk. Don't be too fussy. In my experience, they probably won't stick around anyway. The back country does weird things to people. After only an hour on the track a lot of my newly found companions go strangely silent or claim that they need personal space and sprint ahead. Others suddenly remember important meetings back in town. And get this, on our second night out one young lady even said, 'Oh no, really, it's all right, you have the tent. I actually prefer to sleep under the stars'. How weird can you go?

## 2 Travel heavy

Don't be a lightweight bore. The last thing this country needs is another gram-crazy bushwalker shortening shoelaces and cutting toothbrushes in half. The days of travelling light are over. Get with it and grab the biggest rucksack you can find—about 120 litres is perfect—and make it bulge. Put in a little extra food and clothing (nothing too heavy, of course) and inflate empty wine casks to fill out the rest of the pack. You'll look incredibly tough just lifting this monster off the ground. Passers-by will think you're in training for a polar trek. More to the point, no one will dare to criticise you for those extra rest stops or setting up camp early. What a hero!

## 3 Respect the environment

We live in such a fragile world. As one of nature's chosen helpers it's your duty to point out to everyone the damage they do to our pristine wilderness. Explain how every breath they take adds to the





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greenhouse effect and how all those senseless footsteps crush micro-organisms and scar the landscape. Toileting is a sticky subject that often gets up people's noses. Remember, actions speak louder than words. Every night I like to build a nice big bonfire and show the group gathered around how I burn my used toilet paper.

#### 4 Clear that campsite

Hey, Mr and Ms Selfish, pitching your tent in a designated site denies other travellers the same privilege. Come on, do the right thing and carve out a new tent space in a highly visible spot nearby. If this happens to be a sensitive revegetation area so be it; at least you've left room for latecomers. Besides, a lot of park rangers earn an honest living putting up new barriers and warning signs around campsites. Do you want to see them on the dole?

#### 5 Hidden dangers

You can't be too careful these days. Whenever I meet a group of novice walkers I like to brief them on the hazards of our rugged bush environs. It doesn't do any harm to run through a list of local venomous reptiles and arachnids, pointing out the violent effects of the neurotoxins and the high probability of returning home in one of those nifty body bags. I'm also amazed how many city slickers—especially young kiddies—don't know about the strains of flesh-eating bacteria waiting in the undergrowth. Agonising death and a potential loss of limbs lurk around every corner. Those little tacklers can sob all they like but they have to realise it's a jungle out there. As I always tell them, 'If you lose your legs, don't come running to me'.

#### 6 Good vibrations

Nobody likes the eerie silence of the bush—your companions are probably spooked and homesick. Do everyone a favour; carry a ghetto blaster and get the whole valley bopping along to your favourite Kylie tunes. When your fellow campers have gone to bed slip on a restful soundtrack like *Silence of the Lambs*. Every second in the wild is precious, so just before dawn give those sleepyheads a big blast of Metallica. Your chums will be so glad to get the wake-up call. Anyway, who needs all that silly shut-eye? Rock on!

#### 7 Keep it clean

Make no mistake, the outdoors is just plain unsanitary: think of all that icky dirt and those billions of fungal spores. So it's always a good idea to carry a range of top-brand cleaning products. Before sitting on a rock I like to give it a quick once-over with disinfectant and a scourer. And who needs whiffy body odour and unpleasant cooking smells? To be on the safe side, keep a can of 'Rainforest Breeze' air freshener close by at all times. At the end of each day, hop into

the nearest waterhole with your shampoo and 'mango passion' bath gel. Then stroll back into camp and watch those heads turn!

#### 8 Accidents will happen

If your stove has set fire to a friend's tent or you spill a mug of tea over their sleeping bag, stay calm. Point out that the outdoors is no place for hysterics. Remember the golden rule: never apologise and never explain. Should you sneeze into a stranger's dinner simply change the subject. Saying you're sorry only makes them feel worse—anyway, it's downright un-Australian.

#### 9 The big chill

Death by hypothermia can be fatal. Trust me, I know. After dinner I like to invite group members into my tent for a bit of one-on-one emergency role play. First I show them how to rewarm the patient's core temperature by stripping naked and sharing a sleeping bag. Then we treat frostbitten body parts—feet, fingers, nose—by tucking them into each other's groin. This kind of training does rub some members up the wrong way but if they give you the cold shoulder, tell them where to stick it.

#### 10 Is that love in the air?

There's no doubt the wilderness brings out the cruel, vindictive streak in all of us. But there are tender moments too, and not just in cowboy movies. Don't be surprised if emotional scenarios sneak up on you when sharing a campfire or gazing with a stranger into a big, starry sky. Such intimacy is only natural, even with lone, bearded types carrying extra-large rucksacks.

#### 11 Kiss that compass goodbye

Maps are just another childish construct imposed on the wilderness by descendants of the invading races. Don't perpetuate these imperialist symbols of possession. All that navigation stuff is so, like, yesterday. Instead, revel in the freedom of losing yourself in the majesty of nature. Learn the joy of travelling in circles and revisiting the same dead-end canyon day after day. There's no shame here, just the comforting knowledge that you're upholding a great Aussie tradition—the pointless exercise.

#### 12 Making conversation

A day of vibrant exertion and sparkling mountain vistas often leaves people speechless. Nature abhors a vacuum so do your bit to get the chit-chat going. The bush is a great forum for meaningful dialogue. Perhaps kick things off by going around the circle questioning everyone's sexuality and religious beliefs. If sharing a campfire with visitors from distant lands, show some respect. Give a friendly smile when you ask them about life in their miserable little country. I know it's hard but try to avoid racial slurs—unless they're French.

#### 13 Leaving word

Telling the family where you're going and when you'll be back will only make them worry. It's much more kind to keep them in the dark—after all, ignorance is bliss. And as the search enters its second week, think of the story your distraught relatives can sell to 'A Current Affair'. The authorities will also be secretly thrilled that they can try out their latest rescue action plan. When you finally return to the waiting media don't forget to look relieved. Feigning a limp, chronic fatigue and/or amnesia never goes astray either. With any luck you'll soon be signing a tell-all book deal while rosy-cheeked locals shout you beers at the pub. Way to go!

#### 14 Prepare to share

The outdoors is a caring place. It's important that everyone in the group knows how you feel. No grumble should be bottled up. As

### Quentin Chester

After 30 years of walking and climbing, Quentin Chester is still tapping into the call of the wild. He has written widely about his travels and tribulations, including books on Kakadu and the Kimberley, as well as many stories about his fervour for the Flinders Ranges. [qchester@snet.com.au](mailto:qchester@snet.com.au)



they say, a problem shared is a problem halved, so don't keep your mates guessing. Every few minutes jerk their chain with a good old whinge about the weather or how slow they're walking. And please, be considerate. If you have to wander off because your bowels are playing up during the night, then by all means keep everyone posted on your movements—but try not to give them an earful.

#### 15 You know it makes sense

It is sad that a lot of irresponsible individuals believe they can simply walk into the bush and enjoy the experience. It's a disturbing sign if people take it upon themselves to have a good time when they should be relying on authorities like me to show them how. Take it from an outdoors insider, what the world needs now is more experts. 📌

*Quentin Chester*

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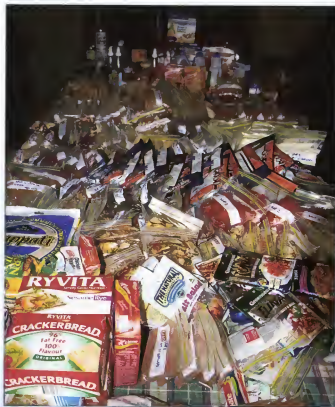
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# Going the Distance

An extended bushwalk requires substantial planning—and legwork. Rob Brittle offers ideas and advice gathered along the Australian Alps Walking Track

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING AN EXTENDED BUSHWALK IS SIMPLY A NATURAL progression from other multiday bushwalks. The key differences are the meticulous planning necessary and the need for skills that enable you to deal with the day-to-day challenges that might otherwise pose a threat to the success of the trip. For some people, this type of extended adventure has about as much appeal as root-canal surgery! For my partner Anna England and me, the dream of planning and completing the 680 kilometre Australian Alps Walking Track (AAWT) in 53 days during the spring of 2004 proved to be an unforgettable experience. We discovered a freedom, independence and deep satisfaction found in very few other aspects of modern life. With organisation and commitment, what might now be a distant dream can become one of the greatest achievements of your outdoors life.



*Did somebody say organised? Some of the 160 meals ready to be packed into six food drops. Anna England.*

**Left**, a long way to go, a long way travelled: Anna and Rob look south to the New South Wales Main Range from the summit of Mt Jagungal. All uncredited photos by the author





## Choosing a walk

From my experience, an 'extended bushwalk' is not necessarily defined by distance, but rather by the length of time required to complete it. I refer to extended bushwalking as any walk that requires one or more food drops and/or equipment resupplies. To contemplate an extended walk you need to love three things: walking, carrying your house on your back and the natural environment. If you

the passion, the drive and—most importantly—the commitment to plan and execute it.

Some things to consider when deciding on a route include:

- The length of time you can afford to be away from other commitments such as work, family and education.
- The level and type of challenge you are seeking, whether physical (tackling steep terrain) or intellectual/cultural (passing through historical areas, pilgrimages).

fitness, skills, emotional fortitude, personal habits, lifestyle, occupation, time, financial constraints and family commitments. Ultimately, you need to get along very well in close quarters. Your companions will be your emotional and physical support, and at times your sole source of entertainment! When considering a walking partner it is wise to discuss goals and expectations for the walk and openly consider how well they match your own. Generally the best walking partner will be someone with whom you have had successful, positive walking or adventure experiences in the past.

## Food and equipment drops

Unless you're training for Special Forces selection or aiming to drop three sizes to get into a wedding dress, anything more than ten days will require at least one food drop. The more drops there are, the less weight is carried for each leg of the walk. This reduced weight may increase enjoyment but it adds to your pre-departure planning and preparation.

You can store the contents of your drop in everything from expensive raft barrels to cheap, plastic rubbish bins: it comes down to choice and budget. It is very important that the containers are totally waterproof, strong and durable, protected from the sun and



*The second drop, in place and intact, at Mt St Bernard, the Victorian Alps. Below, after weeks of bush cooking, she's got it down to a fine art! Anna England (aka the pancake master) shows off her skills in the Schlink Hilton, Kosciuszko National Park.*

truly value these things, the decision to do a big walk should come easily. Choosing where to go can be more challenging. For us the decision was simple. We had guided extensively in, and consequently fallen in love with, our very own Australian Alps and we wanted to fill in the missing gaps and visit some of the areas we'd never seen. The AAWT, an established walking track across the High Country of Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, was the ideal route for us, with just a few little side trips. However, the reality is that any distance between two places can be a target for an extended walk as long as you have

- The type of environment in which you enjoy walking (desert crossings, alpine traverses).
- Any other specific goals you might have for the walk (covering a certain distance, finishing the walk by a certain date).

## Partners in crime

Finding a partner or group for such a walk is unlikely to be as simple as posting an advertisement on the community noticeboard. The decision needs to be considered carefully. You will be living in one another's pockets so weigh up factors such as age,

***“We discovered a freedom, independence and deep satisfaction found in very few other aspects of modern life. With organisation and commitment, what might now be a distant dream can become one of the greatest achievements of your outdoors life.”***



heat, hidden from other outdoors adventurers and well secured to avoid inadvertently feeding the local wildlife. When you place the drops at the locations selected, record their position on your map and GPS. Label each with a waterproof sign indicating the vital importance of its contents.

We used modified 15 and 20 litre farm drench containers which proved to be effective and inexpensive. We cut the tops from the drums, thoroughly cleaned the containers, lined them with double garbage bags and packed all our goodies inside, then knotted the bags. The lids were slipped back on and the overlapping edges sealed with duct tape. At every drop we packed a personal treat (usually chocolate) to be enjoyed the moment we arrived at the drop location. When we were packing the containers it didn't seem important but these little treats were a nice surprise and lifted our spirits.

We made five food drops, between 100 and 125 kilometres apart (seven to ten walking days). The number and location of drops may depend on your access to the park or property, the time of year (some roads through the High Country are closed during winter) and the condition of access roads—you may need a four-wheel-drive vehicle. It might also depend on the time between when you place the drops and begin the walk as some foods will perish faster than others. You may need to organise someone to put the drop in place later.

Some thought should go into additional equipment that might be needed along the route. Rather than carrying these consumable or spare items (some of which are

heavy) all the time, we split them into our various food drops.

If you are using food and/or equipment drops, you will also have to retrieve your stashed rubbish after the walk. One of the pleasures of extended walking is not having to step over the rubbish carelessly dropped by those who think someone else will pick it up—let's keep it that way.

## Chow time

The subject of what to eat, even on a short walk, will always produce some colourful opinions. On extended expeditions not only is the variety and taste of the food important, but also the ease of preparation and—most importantly—the energy and nutrition provided by each snack or meal. When making decisions about food, ask yourself these three questions: is it lightweight? Is it easy to prepare? Is it tasty, nutritious and high in energy? A rotating menu of dehydrated favourites is a good place to start. Think carefully about how perishable foods are. At times you will need to make small trade-offs between the taste and longevity of the food you pack. Carefully check the use-by dates when you purchase the food. Five weeks into a long walk and three days from a food drop is no place to be experimenting with emergency bush-tucker skills!

Extended walking with a rucksack entails prolonged, moderate to high levels of physical exertion. Despite our society's current obsession with protein in our daily diets, carbohydrates need to constitute at least 60 per cent of all meals to fulfil our daily energy requirements. If you are planning a trip in an area with a cold climate or high altitude, factor in even higher levels of carbohydrates. Our individual carbohydrate quantities for dinner included: 125 grams of pasta; half a cup of rice; or half a cup of couscous (all uncooked). Protein and fat should comprise 25 per cent and 15 per cent of each meal, respectively.

We repackaged 90 per cent of our food before departure. Packaged food from the supermarket is meant to sit on the pantry shelf at home, not be stuffed over and over into a rucksack. Dry foods were repackaged into resealable ziplock bags, a method we have been using successfully for ten years. When the bags were empty we left them in

our food drop 'returns' to be reused on future trips. Liquids such as honey, soy, jam and oil were decanted into small Nalgene containers.

## Health and fitness

So, you want to do a big walk—punch out 12 to 25 kilometres a day, carrying 15 to 25 kilograms on your back for weeks on end? Injury and illness are the biggest threats on an extended walk. Often a disproportionate amount of time is spent planning food, equipment, routes and other logistical details, while the physical preparation needed to enjoy the challenge of walking several hundred kilometres with your house on your back is neglected.

The best type of training for walking with a pack on is, surprisingly enough, walking with a pack on! However, people don't always have a fully loaded pack ready, or the time to go out into the hills and stomp around. From our experience the next best thing is a regular diet of long, slow, distance running on tracks. If you are not used to this sort of exercise start slowly and aim for 20–30 minutes of slow jogging a couple of times a week. Gradually increase the duration and intensity, aiming for bouts of 45–90 minutes three or four times a week. This will help to increase your cardiovascular capacity to cope with the similar demands of constant moderate-intensity walking with a pack. It will also strengthen the legs and arms, another benefit when carrying the extra load over varied elevations and terrain. During your trip, 30 minutes of stretching or yoga as soon as you reach camp each day will reduce muscle soreness, increase the range of motion in joints and, most importantly on a long walk, reduce your susceptibility to muscle and joint injuries.

You can also consider factoring in a few rest days. We averaged about one rest day a week. This allowed us time to do side trips to surrounding areas without full packs, do the much-needed washing (the food-drop containers make ideal washtubs), sort through food/clothes drops, or watch the

*Rob feeling strong—254 kilometres walked, 429 to go. Mt Nelse, the Bogong High Plains, Victoria. England*

### Typical consumable or spare items

spare torch	torch batteries
stove parts	stove fuel
toilet paper	toiletries
film	matches/lighter
pot scrubbers	washing powder
first aid kit supplies	camera batteries
spare sunglasses	spare beanies
garbage bags	pack liners
detergent and disinfectant	
relevant maps for that section	
batteries for GPS and water purifier	
in some cases, full 20 litre water drums	



bad weather pass. Most importantly, it gave us the opportunity to savour the experience and process the incredible journey we were taking. We used this time to write, take photos, read books, talk to the kangaroos, or perch on a rock outcrop and soak up the priceless benefits of living so simply.

If you don't already hold a wilderness first aid qualification, be sure to do a course before you begin the walk. This sort of training will develop your confidence and ability to deal with simple problems such as blisters and diarrhoea, as well as the treatment of more sinister threats like allergic reactions, fractures, and heat and cold injuries.

Ensure that your first aid kit is well-stocked. A few handy tips:

- Your first aid kit will be pulled in and out of your pack a number of times a day so it needs to be tough. Keep it organised, clean and tidy.
- Keep the contents dry at all times. Commercially available custom kits are a good start. You can also use dry bags and small Pelican cases to keep the contents protected.
- Don't carry anything in your first aid kit that you don't know how to use or aren't familiar with.
- Cover the back of medication packages with a strip of tape. Over time the foil seal can tear, creating a non-sterile environment. Check that medications are not out of date or damaged by heat.
- A broad-spectrum antibiotic is a good idea to fight off gastroenteritis and respiratory or wound infections (a trip to the doctor will be required).

Remember that if you or your companion are injured or ill the contents of the first aid kit won't necessarily be your best asset in dealing with the situation—rather it will be the skills, knowledge and attitudes you have developed through wilderness first aid training.

## Get skilled

Since Anna and I had both worked as outdoors guides for a number of years, we took for granted some of the key skills needed for an extended trip. For example, many of the AAWT markers had been destroyed in the 2001 bushfires, leaving us to do far more active navigation than simply wandering along from one shiny, yellow diamond to the next. Outlined below is what we believe to be essential skills for an extended walk such as a traverse of the AAWT during spring:

- 'Leave no trace' techniques
- Basic weather reading
- Wilderness first aid training
- Off-track navigation with topographic map and compass
- Lightweight stove use

- Equipment repair
- Tent erection in stormy weather
- Swollen river crossings, and the judgement to know when to wait
- GPS and EPIRB operation
- Spring snow travel

## Fun and games

Six or seven weeks can be a long time without an episode of 'Desperate Housewives' for some people, and for others it's not long enough! Mental stimulation on an extended

wasn't limited to words like peg, hungry, sore, lost, snake and so on!

## Putting your life on hold

Before walking out the door and into the adventure of a lifetime, of brilliant landscapes, epic tales and unforgettable memories, make a few plans so that you can make the transition back into your old life after the walk. Organise your last day and first day back at work well in advance, select an auto-pay system for your bills, eat all the fresh food in the kitchen, and arrange for someone to water the plants, feed the fish and collect the mail. It may be worth making trips to the doctor and dentist for check-ups before you depart. Leave detailed notes for friends or family of your chosen route and time frame.

Returning to the busy pace of modern life can be a bit of a shock to the system. Take time to process the incredible journey you've just experienced, savour it, get your photos developed, type up your journal. One of the most enjoyable road trips I've ever taken was heading back along the route we'd just walked to pick up our returns and the rubbish we'd stashed. It provided a means to remember the brilliant times we'd had along the way. Whatever you do, don't plan to attend the company board-meeting the day you walk back into civilisation!

Many folks, myself included, have said: 'The Australian Alps Walking Track—I'd love to do that!' For many the desire and interest are there, but it is easy to create any number of reasons why the dream can never become a reality. Contrary to first thought, shouldering the pack and walking is the easy part. The difficult part is making the decision to do it, and then following through by making it a priority in your life. Be one of the folks who can say, 'The Australian Alps Walking Track—I've done that!'



*Anna lines up another winning hand in the 'Alps World Series Gin Rummy'. Below, the author enjoys a cuppa and the crossword in the Barry Mountains, Victoria, England*

walk is a very personal thing. Long periods with an idle mind, doing nothing more than counting the grid squares in the ripstop tent ceiling, are the whole purpose of the trip for some folk, while for others some rigorous, cognitive exercise is a must to prevent cabin fever. Most of the time Anna and I were happy to let our minds and topics of conversation wander from the composition of belly-button lint to the exact location of Osama Bin Laden. We did, however, have forms of 'structured' entertainment to prevent us from going totally crazy!

Before beginning the AAWT we had friends and family write a bunch of secret topics for us to discuss on the walk. These were put into an envelope and we would draw one out each day as we walked, with the challenge being to chat about whatever the topic was for at least half an hour. The topic often gave us as much insight into the person who had written it as it did about our own opinions on the subject. The topics included things such as: 'If you could have a super power what would it be?', 'When is it okay to lie?' and 'Describe the other person as a bird, musical instrument and a piece of outdoors gear'.

A small pack of cards came along for the 'Alps World Series Gin Rummy', and in each food drop we included five or six crossword-puzzle pages, so that our vocabulary

## Rob Brittle

lives in Canberra and works as an outdoors guide and trainer. He spends a lot of his free time planning adventures and chasing dreams with his partner Anna. One of his favourite places to climb, ski, paddle and walk is the Australian Alps.





SENIOR SAVIOUR

# TIGER Walker, Environmental Lion

*Jacqui Knox profiles Alex Colley, one of Australia's most inspiring conservationists and a legendary bushwalker*





**THE HIGH SANDSTONE CLIFFS GLOW ORANGE.** The air is chilly and shadows veil the valley floor, 500 precipitous metres below. Across the gorge, Thurat Spires streak the fading afternoon light. And westwards, waterfalls stream down, way down, under a pink sky.

Alex Colley OAM loves this view; the 97-year-old wilderness campaigner and legendary bushwalker once fought long years for it. He describes the scene with a smile, his bright marsupial eyes gleaming: 'Marvellous.'

In the late 1960s the Boyd Plateau, near Kanangra Walls in the southern Blue Mountains, New South Wales, was about to be cleared and planted with radiata pines. A vicious campaign to save this bushwalkers' paradise began.

writing. In a tiny room above the Kent Street bustle, he's dwarfed by stacked cardboard boxes containing the fund-raising book *Blue Mountains World Heritage* (2004), written by Colley and illustrated by Henry Gold's photographs.

The book describes some 70 years throughout which Colley—alongside other conservation heroes such as Myles and Milo Dunphy—was involved in the marathon struggle to secure a 240 kilometre chain of national parks across the Blue Mountains. When World Heritage listing was granted in 2000, Colley was the last of these original bushwalkers still pursuing their early vision.

It was a complex feat but Colley had a simple motivation. 'I spent all those years bush-

or three hours later and found there was a panic. Nobody knew what had happened to us', he recalls.

From that day on, the bush had Colley hooked. He explored the timbered hills around Lithgow, and devastated native fauna with steel bolts fired from his catapult. He remembers looking around between shots and thinking, 'I wonder how long those mountains go on?' It took him many years to find the answer.

As a young man Colley went west to try his hand as a jackaroo, but decided life on the land was too tough. At the start of the Great Depression he jumped on the train back to Sydney. He finished high school and even-



**Bottom left**, the 'Tiger Walkers' at Norbert Carlon's Farm, the Blue Mountains, April 1937: Jack Debert (left), Gordon Smith, Bill McCosker, Len Scotland, David Stead, Alex Colley, Hilma Galliot, Dot English (later Butler), Carlon, Max Gentle. David Stead. **Far left**, the 'first walk' along the Kowmung River, Christmas 1938, Galliot at front.

**Left**, the Tigers on Ti Willa Plateau, Kanangra-Boyd National Park, in 1937. Alex Colley is fourth from right. Stead.

**Above left**, reflections on time past...Mary Smith (left), Alex Colley, Phil White, Jack Debert and Gordon Smith share a campfire at Kanangra Walls in 1938. **Above right**, 50 years later and still going strong! Alex Colley (left), Roy Braithwaite, Reg Alder and Dot Butler in Namadgi National Park, Australian Capital Territory, in the late 1980s. Reg Alder. All uncredited photos Alex Colley collection

'We won', chuckles Colley. But he kept on fighting anyway, long after the plateau was saved in 1975. Until last year, Colley caught a train from his house in northern Sydney to the cramped city office of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness (Colong) three or four days a week. Colley's many roles at Colong included editing the *Colong Bulletin* for nearly 40 years, and he's still

walking. I love the bush, and I wanted to serve it.'

Born in Lithgow in 1909, Colley was four years old when he embarked on his first bushwalk—so to speak. While his parents were visiting a family friend, Colley trotted off with their daughter, Norma McKillop, also aged four.

'We set off for a walk down the creek. We had a lovely walk, but we came back two

tually enrolled in evening economics classes at the University of Sydney, working 44 hours a week to pay for his tuition. According to campfire legend, he lived off handfuls of unpolished rice and oatmeal and—like all the best legends—it's true.

But chance has also played a hand in Colley's story. One evening in 1932 he began chatting to a fellow student. It took months

“We weren't all tigers really”, he says with a grin.  
“Some of us were rabbits...I caught up with the others at mealtimes.”

## Alex Colley A TIME LINE

### 1 August 1909

Born in Lithgow, where his father was the local bank manager.

**1913** Goes for his first 'bushwalk' near Lithgow.

**1920** Family moves to Sydney. Colley spends six months in bed with a badly burnt leg.

**1927** Walks up the length of the Grose River to Blackheath in three days.

**1931** Begins degree in economics at the University of Sydney but quits as the Depression worsens and he can't find employment.

**1932** Myles Dunphy proposes a 'Blue Mountains National Park with Primitive Areas'; Colley works throughout the decade to convince the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs to adopt Dunphy's plan as their chief conservation objective.

**1935** Completes economics degree and works for administration department at the University of Sydney.

**1936** Joins Sydney Bush Walkers where he meets Myles Dunphy and Dot Butler.

### April 1937

Formation of the legendary 'Tigers'.

**1942** Employed by Department of Post-war Conservation.

**1948** Begins work as research officer for the NSW Liberal Party.

**1951** Marries fellow bushwalker Hilma Galliot.

**1952** Daughter Frances born.

**1958** Member of first walking party to cross the Budawangs (NSW) from Sassafras to Yadboro.

**1959** First section of Blue Mountains National Park declared.

**1963** Begins work for the State Planning Authority.

**1968** Colong Caves campaign begins under Milo Dunphy; formation of the Colong Committee and first issue of the *Colong Bulletin*.

**1970** Campaign to stop logging on the Boyd Plateau begins.

**1975** Retires from the State Planning Authority. Continues voluntary work as secretary of Colong and Editor of the *Colong Bulletin*. Takes up campaigns for the Border Ranges and the Greater Blue Mountains National Park.

**1981** Hilma dies. Colley receives Order of Australia Medal.

**1982** Made an honorary member of the Sydney Bush Walkers.

**1984** Blue Mountains World Heritage campaign begins.

**1991** Last extended walk, in Macdonnell Ranges (NT) with Dot Butler.

**2000** World Heritage listing granted for the greater Blue Mountains. Colley receives Senior Australian of the Year award.

**2001** Wins *Australian Geographic* silver medallion for conservation.

**2004** Collaborates with Henry Gold to publish *Blue Mountains World Heritage*.

**2006** Resigns as secretary of Colong but continues his work on the *Colong Bulletin*.

to discover that his new friend was the president of the Sydney Bush Walkers. Founded in 1927, the young club was exploring wild, poorly mapped parts of the Blue Mountains with names like Mt Misery, Despond Ridge, and Sorrow Gully. When he finished his degree, Colley eagerly went to a meeting. Six months later he was invited on a walk with rough-country walker Max Gentle and champion long-distance walker Gordon Smith.

Their ambitious target was Mt Guoogang, in the southern Blue Mountains, by way of the Kedumba and Cox's rivers. This walk, Colley was told, entailed 70 miles of hard, trackless walking, and several thousand-metre climbs. He was horrified, so he decided to go. 'It was a hard walk, but harder walks have been done since', Colley claims. Yet soon afterwards 'Little Alex' and his mates were dubbed the Tiger Walkers, renowned for slogging across huge distances in a weekend.

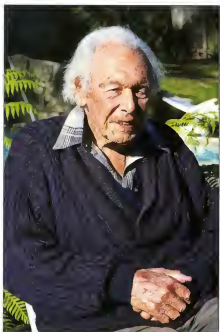
He walked with the Tigers throughout the 1930s and later married a fellow Tiger, Hilma Galliot. 'I walked with her for a while and we got closer and closer and after ten years we were married. We knew each other perfectly! I made many beautiful friends bushwalking and most of them were friends for life.'

Curiously, Alex recalls that their 'Tiger' nickname was never intended as a reference to their ferocious personalities. It caught on when a trip report was signed off with the names of each walker, lined up to spell the words 'TIGERS ALL'. But the name stuck, despite Colley's protests. 'We weren't all tigers really', he says with a grin. 'Some of us were rabbits...I caught up with the others at meal-times.'

Despite his joking, Colley believes that some of his walks have never been attempted by another party. In particular he remembers a ten-day walk across the relatively unexplored expanse of what is now Wollemi National Park in the northern Blue Mountains. Carrying little water and equipped only with rough maps, he and two mates set out along the Wolgan River and walked north to Mount Coricudgy, and then followed their noses east to Putty. 'It's all the sort of country that bushwalkers have hardly been

into at all. We didn't know anything about the country, we just set off', he says. 'That was the fun of it for me—we got there all right.'

And remarkably this 'rabbit' was still undertaking extended walks until ten years ago, when he last headed off to the bush with lifelong friend Dot Butler, with whom he lived after his wife's death in 1981. Both Colley and Butler were in their 80s, but still



*Colley in 2005. Jacqui Knox. Below, Dot Butler (left), Colley and wife Hilma Galliot at the NSW National Parks Association dinner in 1971.*

had 'a nice long walk' for ten days along the base of the Macdonnell Ranges in the Northern Territory. Butler, the barefoot bushwalker, declined to wear shoes.

But Colley's bushwalking began to fizzle out in 1997, shortly before he slipped and fractured his neck while trying to lap up some sun at home. It was his first major injury, miles from the bush. 'It's rather remarkable



when you think of all the places you went, swimming flooded rivers and scrambling up cliffs and that sort of thing,' he laughs. 'I guess I was pretty agile and pretty careful in the bush.'

After 60 years and wearing through five pairs of ripple-soled desert boots (and not a single pair of Volleys) Colley, now white-haired, had answered his childhood question. Those mountains he could see from Lithgow really did go on forever.

And the campaigns to protect them went on even longer. In 1934, Australia didn't have a single national park. Today, over six million hectares of NSW are protected. But Colley's proudest moment came in 2000, when a million hectares of the Blue Mountains escarpment was given UNESCO World Heritage listing. It was Colley who proposed this World Heritage listing in 1984 even though he jests that his biggest contribution to the campaign was refusing the position of President of the Colong Committee!

Over the years Colley and his colleagues developed many of the techniques used by environmental lobbyists today including protests, cave-ins (sit-in protests underground), marathon runs, and abseiling stunts opposite Parliament House. But he reckons their brightest idea involved buying shares in a cement company wanting to mine for lime-

## Kosciuszko National Park enters its most dangerous era

The Colong Foundation's Fiona McCrossin outlines why

Imagine a natural world that stretches from rugged coastal wilderness through forested hills and valleys towards the highest mountain on the world's largest island. A special place; a place so rare that it has been deemed by some of the finest scientific minds in the country to be of international significance. No, this is not a legendary prehistoric park, rather some of the wildest country remaining in Australia—a national park system that stretches through NSW and Victoria, from the sea to the Alps, a system that took decades to protect.

Now imagine a group of developers espousing the idea of park exploitation, use and abuse. While most of the land in this area is protected from such levels of threat, in Kosciuszko National Park the ski industry is facing climate change by 'diversifying' and developers are pushing for lucrative real estate deals across areas ten times the size of the Sydney CBD.

With a predicted loss of up to 95 per cent of snow cover by 2050, ski-industry executives have been holding closed meetings with various levels of government. (They left the public 'stakeholder' processes long ago, with cries that scientists warning against further development were biased.) And the government has been responding, referring to developers' plans as 'visionary' and even declaring the areas involved 'State significant'—a planning category which excludes them from the need to adhere to long-standing environmental laws.

Plans include a huge range of tourist accommodation, infrastructure and 'resort activities', and extend far beyond the already overexploited Thredbo, with major inroads into the Perisher Range (including Perisher Valley, Guthega and Smiggin Holes), Mt Selwyn and Charlottes Pass. It's not hard to see what's behind the push. Thredbo leasehold land already commands prices well above the million-dollar mark. However, until now such development was deemed illegal in other areas of the park.

Perisher Blue is one company that will need to change its lease in order to realise its multi-stage development plans. The company, owned by James Packer and Transfield Holdings, has lodged an application for a 240-apartment,

846-bed resort with 7300 square metres of retail and commercial space in Perisher Valley—seven buildings up to five stories high. Clearing of internal roads in the traditionally snow-bound valley would allow cars to access other planned developments further up the mountain. Meanwhile, the National Parks & Wildlife Service that manages the park has been allocated 57 square metres on the site, compared with 129 square metres for 'Real Estate Marketing Management'.

In July 2005 Perisher Blue put its lease up for sale and then withdrew. A few months later Colong obtained a copy of the lease, which revealed that it did not allow the company's proposed development. In November 2005, the NSW Government announced that it would provide \$250 million for upgrading the park's infrastructure, of which \$160 million would be needed to 'provide greater certainty for future investment in Perisher' (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal media release on 5 November 2005). Colong understands that the NSW Government is currently negotiating new terms and conditions for Perisher Blue's lease, with the company wanting to begin the development after the 2006 ski season.

Kosciuszko National Park is on the brink of one of its most dangerous eras—environmental groups have made its protection a priority. One step towards this protection is national and World Heritage listing of the 'snow to sea' parks. Geoff Mosley AM, who heads a working group for the listing, has described this as 'the most challenging and most potentially rewarding heritage project in our history'. It's up to us all to prove we are up to the task.

Contact the Colong Foundation to see how you can help: 0404 616 963; fiona@colongwilderness.org.au or visit [www.colongwilderness.org.au](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au)

In 1989, a love of the sea, the snow and the bush meshed and Fiona McCrossin found herself involved in the south-east forest campaign, with many others. Thousands of words, hundreds of kilometres and many protests later the work for wild places continues. Campaigns take years. Patience is essential. Her mentors, Jeff Angel of Total Environment Centre and Alex Colley of Colong, taught her this.

### Jacqui Knox

is a journalist in Sydney. She enjoys bushwalking and carrying things in the Blue Mountains and beyond. She first spoke with Alex Colley only recently, not feeling much noise for having just such an inspirational bushwalker.



stone and, armed with one share each, stacking its meetings.

For all his activism, Colley says he hasn't made any enemies. Instead, he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 1981 for his continuing and totally voluntary commitment to conservation. 'I was pleased to have it, but not so much for myself', he says. 'The beauty of the scheme is that whenever I write a letter I can add OAM, and that seems to draw more attention.' Colley has even been bushwalking with two of NSW's most influential former premiers, Bob Carr and Neville Wran.

He's still aware that connections can be important. The fight we're on about now is the commercial development of

Kosciuszko National Park, and the fight we're up against is Perisher Blue', he says. Environmentalists say that the proposed developments, which include car parks, golf courses and cinemas, will lead to more cars, more sewerage, and more damage to the park (see box above). But Colley appears undaunted by his opponent. 'Well, we beat the biggest cement company, and we might yet beat this development too. Stopping this is extremely important because we've only got one little alpine area. The rest of the state is mostly hot and dry.'

And what with global warming, worldwide overpopulation, shifting Australian weather patterns, and coal mining underneath dams, he says our woes will only become worse.

'We may suffer more than any nation on the whole earth.'

But Alex Colley doesn't like to dwell on the negative. In between all his unpaid efforts, Alex worked on Liberal Party policy and economical analysis for the State Planning Authority, and he's still convinced that environmental protection makes good economic sense. He urges conservation groups to be proactive, to put plans forward and attack government obsession with growth. 'The only way in conservation that we can keep on is with all this voluntary organisation', he says.

Certainly, Alex plans to keep fighting as long as he can. And legend has it, Tiger Walkers don't quit easily. 🐅



# Pretty Valleys, High Plains

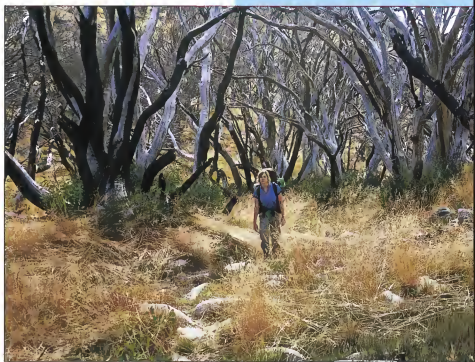
Megan Holbeck goes rambling in the Victorian Alps

THE BOGONG HIGH PLAINS SEEMED DETERMINED to make a good impression. The morning was beautiful—sunny, crisp and still—and the light of early autumn gave the landscape a warm, golden tinge. We walked across the Pretty Valley Pondage causeway; the Fainter fire track climbing the hill ahead was the only landmark we recognised. This was our first trip to the area, not counting a skiing trip in winter when snow had disguised the land. After a few aborted plans for longer walks to take in the area's namesake mountain, we'd been inspired by Glenn van der Knijff's track notes for weekend walks (*Wild* no 91) and planned to get a trip in before winter reclaimed the High Country.

Apart from the weather, it hadn't been the most auspicious start to a walking weekend. A couple of months earlier our multi-coloured Sigma station wagon had finally ground to a halt after six months of push-start-only use, leaving us trapped in the city for too many weekends. We'd hired a car to get out of Melbourne and Guy had been booked for speeding while driving the newer car—a \$360 blow. Because of the resulting delay, on top of a Thursday night dinner that ended late and left a pile of empty wine bottles, we didn't reach our intended destination, the huts near Pretty Valley Pondage, on Friday night. Instead, by the time we reached Tawonga Gap we'd had enough, pulling off on a four-wheel-drive track, unrolling our swag and sleeping so well that we woke only to admire the stars.

After a quick stop at the Mount Beauty bakery for breakfast (where we bumped into a friend from our Melbourne suburb) we reached the walk's start. Following the track up the hill the bovine calling cards were obvious, from trampled ground to more smelly mementos. We tried to ignore—or at least avoid—these, hoping that this would be our last High Country walk with cattle as companions. (Within six months this wish was granted and we trust it will stay that way.)

After less than an hour we reached the crest of the hill, Guy's first blisters tightening on his heels. The boots weren't new—he'd bought them more than a decade ago—but they'd been abandoned at his parents' house in the UK for many years before being re-discovered and returned to the southern hemisphere. However, this period in England in the aptly named 'boot room' hadn't been without its perils. Labradors are fantastic dogs, loyal, cute and friendly, although not renowned for their intelligence; a stereotype that the Sawrey-Cookson's three bitches more than lived up to. (One of them is famous for eating a whole wheel of Stilton cheese



*Like Namia, only drier: the author walks through burnt trees in the Yit-Ma-Thangs. Guy Sawrey-Cookson.*

**Above right,** walkers follow the range's broad ridge towards Mt Niggerhead. Glenn van der Knijff.

**Right,** Guy wasn't sure that photos of his blister treatment were necessary! Mt Feathertop (left) looks on impassively. All uncredited photos by the author

one Christmas, and redecorating the kitchen with it shortly later.) Guy's boots had suffered similar attention. The missing shoelace from one boot had been replaced by a fluoro number—a leftover from the 1980s—but there wasn't much that could be done about the top of the ankle, which was missing a couple of chunks, stuffing poking out of telltale bite marks. Guy had confidently announced that this wouldn't be a problem but his feet disagreed. A few Band-Aids in the right place and he was 'cured', although not convinced that photos of the medical treatment were necessary!

We followed the track down to a saddle decorated with a line of snowpoles, tracing these to the friendly cluster of Tawonga Huts.





# and the **Fainter** View



“Branches of burnt trees formed black arches, dusted with white, supported by trunks frothing green sprouts. The landscape was eerily beautiful and yet vaguely threatening; it was like stepping into Narnia.”



It was an inviting scene: open ground interspersed by clusters of gum trees, beautiful afternoon sunlight and a gurgling creek, and the hut's fireplace promised a cosy evening. Despite Guy's suggestion of a lazy afternoon and a warming fire we continued along the track after a quick lunch, soon reaching the turn-off to the Yit-Ma-Thangs (Niggerheads).

The track was easy to follow as the bushfires of a few years earlier had destroyed the obscuring leaf litter and foliage. The ground grew steeper as we proceeded, the long summer leaving it swathed in golden grass. Branches of burnt trees formed black arches, dusted with white, supported by trunks frothing green sprouts. The landscape was eerily beautiful and yet vaguely threatening; it was like stepping into Namibia. Higher up, the slopes were dotted with boulders, forming jumbled masses on the mountain's top. We dumped our packs and jumped from

We had great views on both sides as we followed the ridge, trying to match the knolls with the map contours. We eventually decided that it was wasted effort as Little Plain must be such a distinctive feature that it couldn't be missed—luckily, we were right. We descended to the plain, avoiding the trampled ground and accompanying mud where possible. We found a perfect campsite nestled among the snow gums, before I

ground, assessing their gradient as if I had an inbuilt spirit level, before Guy pulled the tent out and started putting the poles together.

As we finished setting up our camp, we noticed that the sun wasn't out and the wind had grown fierce—clouds had advanced from the horizon and were marching over the fields. We kitted up and went to meet them, following van der Knijff's writ-



**“Eventually I bit the bullet and left my down cocoon, running around in the howling gale in my thermals...I jumped back into the tent, wet, muddy and frozen, to a contented sigh from Guy: “Much better. You should have done that hours ago.”**”

rock to rock in search of the best lookout. There were fantastic, 360-degree views that revealed the lay of the land in the unfamiliar area, as well as the storm clouds that had gathered on the horizon. We hadn't noticed the wind as we'd climbed but on the summit it was hard to ignore and impossible to escape.

decided that if a branch broke overhead it could be a disaster and the search began again. (I have been known to spend hours walking past restaurants in foreign cities, only to return eventually to the first one that caught my eye. For me, deciding can be a lengthy process!) I spent another 15 minutes or so examining almost identical patches of



ten orders to pick up the fire track. We followed this along, passing another windswept couple, the only other people we saw. The beautiful autumn day had been replaced by a winter afternoon, and Guy's shorts were soon bolstered by gloves and a beanie. By the time we reached Mt Fainter South we were in fog, from where we could see nothing but the approaching storm. Forsaking the 'spectacular views' from Mt Fainter North,

before they arrived, the noise that of a huge truck speeding past as you stand next to a broken-down car on the side of a highway. The fly was flapping like a loose sail; about then I began to regret that we had not put more pegs in the previous afternoon. I adopted the tried and true 'full bladder' response: pretend to sleep, hoping that if you ignore the problem you will fall asleep, waking up—refreshed and ready to go—to a beautiful sunny day. However, this never works, no matter how many times you try it: instead I dozed off, waking up minutes later as the next gust of wind approached, accompanied by rain pelting against the fly. The night was taking on that 3 am feeling: it was too late to want to deal with the problem but too early for morning to seem more than a far-fetched idea. Eventually I bit the bullet and left my down cocoon, running around in the howling gale in my thermals, pushing in tent pegs as Guy directed. I jumped back into the tent, wet, muddy and frozen, to a contented sigh from Guy: 'Much better. You should have done that hours ago.' I took my

over my brain, before we decided on the technical term of 'misting'. We packed up the tent and hit the track again in the general direction of the bakery. We slogged along to Tawonga Huts and retraced our steps to where the snowpoles branched off in the direction of Mt Jim. We'd planned to follow these (and van der Knijff's notes) across the plains to the basalt peak, but considering the weather there didn't seem much point. (In fact, these plans had been made by me, with use of the royal 'we' to make it sound democratic. When broached, they were quickly dismissed—I didn't put up an argument!)

Without anything to look at, or incentive to stop, we reached the car very quickly. It wasn't quite the broad-ranging initial investigation of the area we'd imagined (although that might have required longer than two days!) but we consoled ourselves with the thought that we'd be back, in better weather. Driving home that afternoon, after the obligatory bakery stop, Friday night seemed a long time ago, the weekend lengthened by



## Megan Holbeck

needs to learn to talk up her outdoors exploits: as Editor of *Wild*, she really should be a little more hard core. With less self-deprecation and a little exaggeration, she aims to become a beard-stroker overnight.

we traipsed back down the fire track, the fantastic views of the morning replaced by a game of 'I spy' with the orange markers.

We found the tent again and hopped in, nestling into sleeping bags while cooking in the vestibule. The chilli tuna and tomato pasta was as good as it always is at the end of a day's walk, and before 6 pm the night's highlight—the meal—was behind us. We were asleep before 7 pm, Guy's complaints of it being too early for anyone to sleep being proved wrong.

I don't know what time it was when I first woke up, only that it was very cold, wet and dark outside and warm, dry, safe and comfortable where I was. Gusts of wind were funnelling down the valley and could be heard well



*Megan in the afternoon fog on the way back from Mt Fainter. Sawrey-Cookson. Left, surveying the scene below Tawonga Huts.*



revenge by placing my icicle hands on his warm back.

The beautiful sunny day didn't eventuate: it was still freezing and windy in the morning although somewhat less fierce. The rain had turned to a 'thick fog': it left you damp after a while and wet a while later but didn't seem to be moving enough to qualify as a drizzle—this

proved an interesting topic to ponder as we walked through the cloud. (When I brought this up with Guy he kindly pointed out that the geekdom of editorship had finally taken

leaving town. To celebrate a good walk and our escape from the city, we pulled off the highway at Seymour, keen to try a famous 'Seymour Burger' after a friend rated them his 'number one' choice. Our name was called and we sat down outside the concrete caravan to eat. Guy was happy, declaring Seymour's 'the lot' to be better than bog-standard fast-food fare but still a long way from 'number one'. I pulled the enveloping bread apart and looked at my dinner in disgust: the veggie burger was the same as a normal burger, only without the meat. In effect it was an egg-and-lettuce sandwich, with additional sauce. I began again to appreciate the benefits of the city. ☺



SEASIDE SHENANIGANS

# Eyre, Sea, Sky

Explorations in Western Australia's  
Cape Le Grand National Park,  
by Noeline Proud

AT FIRST IT LOOKED LIKE A BLACK ROCK WITH WAVES WASHING OVER IT. THEN the 'rock' rolled over and a huge black fin flapped above the ocean surface. This was incredible! while hoping to spot a whale on the walk, I had never imagined I would see one while standing at the track head, only seconds into the trip. Hurrying across the beach—as

*The view to the rocky Frenchman Peak from the northern slopes of Mt Le Grand. All photos by the author*





fast as I could through knee-deep seaweed carrying a 13 kilogram pack—and up and across the steep rock face, I got a great view. I was amazed at how massive a southern right whale can be. There was only ever a glimpse of a bit at any time: half a tail here, a flipper there. It wasn't until there were two almost simultaneous whooshes of spray that I realised it was two whales, probably a mother and calf. They cruised along the base of the cliff together. As they moved west and away from my rocky perch, I shouldered my pack and retraced my steps to the track.

The 15 kilometre track was the first leg of a three-day walk in Cape Le Grand National Park, on the south coast of Western Australia. Cape Le Grand is renowned for its magnificent landscape and was also the scene of a significant event in Australian exploration. In 1841 Edward John Eyre and his fellow expeditioner Wylie were in desperate need of food and supplies while attempting to cross from Adelaide to Albany by land. By a great stroke of luck they encountered a French whaling ship anchored in Rossiter Bay, now part of the National Park.

Pondering the fact that whales still draw people to the area, though fortunately for different reasons, I started down the track. It initially sidles around the inland side of two granite peaks, traversing slippery, sloping rock. The forecast maximum temperature was 16°C but it was quite warm walking in the still conditions.

After an hour I took a break at a shallow stream running between the two peaks. The taller one was Mt Le Grand (352 metres). I had planned to climb this peak but sitting on a rock, munching cashews, contemplating its very steep, granite sides, I thought: 'How the hell will I get up there?'

The slope eased further to the east so I decided to give it a go. Leaving my pack leaning against a boulder and taking my jacket, map and nibbles I set off up the north-west side of the peak.

I stepped over streaming water and slippery, black patches on the rock and pushed through outcrops of bushy yate eucalypt and banksias that grow in the shallow soil. I reached the summit's plateau area after 45 minutes' climbing, just as the drizzle turned into a foggy mist. I wanted to see the cape that gives the area its name so headed south. Walking towards the ocean, I was rewarded with glorious, uninterrupted views of the mist.

Conceding defeat, I retraced my way as best I could in the conditions. A short time after beginning the descent I stopped. Everything looked the same but nothing looked familiar. It was only midday so I decided to

sit out the mist, wrapping myself in my jacket. After half an hour the mist lifted; I had come off the summit too far east, so tried to pick the most gentle slope down, knowing I would hit the marked path somewhere on the descent.

Scooting down the steepest places on my butt and getting very wet in the process, I

above the water gave fantastic views of Hellfire Bay, the white sand glowing in the winter sunshine. Climbing down the rocks to the beach, I expected the sand to be soft but it was concrete-hard, squeaking underneath my boots.

Walking along the beach, I couldn't take my eyes off the striking colour of the ocean.



*The author takes in the view over beautiful Hellfire Bay, a tranquil place 'with not even a touch of hellfire'.*

descended Mt Le Grand. The views to the 292 metre Frenchman Peak, my walk's ultimate destination, were fantastic. As the petrel flies, it was only four kilometres away.

I reached the main track a little less than three hours after I left it. Retrieving my pack I continued on, the path eventually turning south-east towards the coast. A rocky cliff

How could a place with such a red name be so amazingly blue? Surely the word aquamarine was coined at Hellfire Bay?

Climbing from the eastern end of the beach, the track crosses a small headland before descending steeply through dunes on to the beach of Little Hellfire Bay. I took a break on this small, idyllic beach. Sitting on the

❧ *How could a place with such a red name be so amazingly blue? Surely the word aquamarine was coined at Hellfire Bay?* ❧

pearly sand, looking out to sea, I wondered how the bay was named. It was peaceful and tranquil, with not even a trace of hellfire.

The afternoon was moving on so I did the same. The track continues across a headland and into thickets of banksia, dryandra, hakea and melaleuca before emerging at a small bay not named on the map. I had



and dense vegetation. The only possibility was to camp on the track itself. I figured that as I hadn't seen another walker all day I wouldn't be blocking any nocturnal pedestrian traffic.

The track was narrower than my one-person tent so it was precariously pitched. The ground on the inland side rose steeply, while on the other it dropped off. I tied the guys to the scrubby trees to help to keep the fly off the inner and hoped that there wouldn't be too much rain. The tent drooped

Le Grand it was an interesting shade of blue.

Although I was only six kilometres from the track head, the rocky terrain and ascent of Mt Le Grand had worn me out. I went to sleep listening to the frogs and the soothing wash of the nearby waves. It was a beautiful, secluded bay to be camped in. It was remarkably warm for winter, still being 9°C at 3 am.

After making it through the night without rolling off the track downhill into the water, I packed up and tackled the steep rock scramble out of the bay. Initially climbing away from



*Rock hopping at the eastern end of Hellfire Bay.*

been told that Boulder Bay was a good place to camp because of its freshwater stream—this no-name bay full of boulders was near Boulder Hill. I joined the dots and dropped my pack.

After scouting around I couldn't find a clear spot to put the tent among the rocks

a lot, fly and inner touching in many places, and it wasn't pegged out properly: the inner billowed in swathes like a silk-lined marquee.

With rehydrating bolognese sauce balanced carefully in a vestibule full of tree roots, I examined my knee, very sore after a fall on the rocks. Like many things in Cape

the ocean, the path soon leads down on to Thistle Cove. The hard, flat sand of Cape Le Grand is the easiest beach walking I have ever done. The array of sea birds on the beach, among them sooty oyster catchers and red capped stilts, made the walking even more pleasant.



# Si je puis: if I can

## The life of Edward John Eyre

Seventeen-year-old Edward John Eyre arrived in Australia in 1833. After life as a squatter, he became a pioneering overlander of livestock, making journeys between Adelaide, Port Phillip and New South Wales. Still with overlanding in mind, he turned to exploration. He planned to journey to the interior of Australia, which was still unknown to Europeans. The family

The expeditioners returned to Fowlers Bay to meet a supply ship, on board which was Wylie, an Aboriginal from King George Sound. He joined the party as Eyre thought his hunting skills and his ability to communicate with the western Aboriginals would be useful.

The party that departed for the last 1400 kilometres to Albany comprised just Eyre, Baxter,



*Meeting between EJ Eyre and Captain Rossiter in 1841 by J MacFarlane.*

Courtesy of the State Library of South Australia, B 2924

motto, *si je puis* (if I can), exemplified Eyre's resolve as an explorer.

Eyre undertook two expeditions in 1839, covering 2500 kilometres of unexplored territory in total. He did not find a stock route from Adelaide to Port Lincoln as hoped, but some new grazing lands were discovered.

After a trip by sea to King George Sound (Albany), Eyre returned to Adelaide where plans were afoot to determine whether a stock route from Adelaide to Albany was possible. Eyre convinced the colonialists that exploring the centre of Australia was a more worthy goal. Eyre led the small expedition, which included his long-time associate Baxter and the Aboriginal men Nerambeenin and Cootachah from Murray–Murrumbidgee. With a silk Union Jack to plant in the centre of Australia, they left Adelaide in June 1840.

After three months, boggy salt lakes and a lack of freshwater halted progress. Ascending a peak at the most northerly point he reached, Eyre could see nothing but arid country. He named the peak Mt Hopeless before retreating, deciding to turn his attention to the expedition's original purpose of finding a stock route from east to west.

After resupplies at Port Lincoln, the party pressed west. A base camp was made at Fowlers Bay, 140 kilometres east of the head of the Bight. Eyre reached the head of the Bight on his third attempt, the party and horses suffering terrible hardships in the heat of early summer. Eyre had an understanding and respect for the Aboriginal people and, as on a number of previous occasions, Aboriginals led the party to water.

Wylie, Nerambeenin and Cootachah. Despite the intense heat, scarce water and relentless flies, Eyre recorded in his journal the beauty of the wild landscape and the lofty cliffs of the Bight.

The horses were too frail to ride so the party often walked 40 kilometres a day. They reached Eyre's Sandpatch where they found both water and grass for the horses and stayed for a month, recovering. Despite low supplies and bleak prospects of success they continued.

One night after leaving Sandpatch, Eyre heard a shot in the camp while he was away tending the horses. Rushing back, he found Baxter dying of a bullet wound. Nerambeenin and Cootachah were gone, along with most of the supplies. Eyre concluded that they had shot Baxter when he confronted them.

Eyre and Wylie set off on the remaining 800 kilometres to Albany. Five weeks after Baxter's death, Eyre and Wylie met the whaling ship at Rossiter Bay.

They reached Albany 22 days after leaving the *Mississippi*, 13 months after leaving Adelaide.

Eyre was awarded a gold medal by the Royal Geographic Society, though he probably considered survival his greatest reward. No new pasture or stock routes were found, but Eyre was the first European to have travelled from South Australia to WA by land.

Eyre became a British colonial administrator, taking up posts in New Zealand and the West Indies. He was recalled to the UK after a scandal over suppression of a rebellion in Jamaica. He died in 1901.

Eyre's journal of the Adelaide–Albany expedition can be found at <http://gutenberg.net.au/explorers-journals.html>

Walking the curve of the cove, I could see on the map a lake that Eyre had visited, just behind the beach. I left my pack on the beach and followed a shallow stream through the dunes to the lake. I concurred with Eyre that I 'could not have pitched upon a more favourable place'.

Climbing above Thistle Cove on the east side there was a lot of burnt scrub, the aftermath of a fire caused by lightning strike. The amazingly sculptured rocks are a reminder of the constant gales howling off the Southern Ocean. From the headland there are sweeping views out to the offshore islands of the Recherche Archipelago. The headland also offers the first glimpses of Lucky Bay, an hour's walk away.

Matthew Flinders named Lucky Bay after anchoring in it for five days in 1802 to escape a violent storm. Nothing could be further from the Lucky Bay I found. The sand was lapped by water pure and translucent at the shore, melting through a range of ever deepening blue.

With one last, long look at Lucky Bay, I followed the path past Mississippi Hill and through thickets of peppermints and she-oaks. The trees were alive with bird calls, honeyeaters contributing to the pleasant clamour.

The track descends a hill before it ends at Rossiter Bay. This beach is one of a couple in the park suitable for four-wheel drives but I had the place to myself. The long beach is backed by a shrub-covered plain and must have seemed remote and desolate to Eyre in 1841 when he found himself on it one year after leaving Adelaide and five months after leaving Port Lincoln. He was hungry, exhausted and desperate and by this stage the surviving horses were on their last legs.

From Rossiter Bay Eyre planned to walk another day to Thistle Cove. Spending the night 'very cold and windy, having neither shelter nor firewood at the sand drifts', the next morning they started for Thistle Cove to rest at the freshwater lake shown on a chart Flinders had made. They set out without breakfast due to lack of supplies.

Starving, haggard and in the last stages of exhaustion, Eyre writes, 'looking towards the sea, I thought I discovered a boat sailing in the bay'. Descending immediately to the shore they lost sight of the boat, but after scouring the ocean the explorers saw not one but now two boats. Eyre concluded that they were whale or seal boats and a larger vessel must be with them. They made a fire, fired shots and waved handkerchiefs, but their soaring hopes soon plummeted when the boats receded from view. Scanning the ocean, they spotted a large, masted ship anchored in the bay. They frantically rode the horses towards it and again made a fire. The crew of the larger ship saw them, and immediately put a boat in the water. In a few minutes Eyre had the pleasure of 'shaking hands with a fellow countryman in the person of Captain Rossiter, commanding the French whaler *Mississippi*'.

Rossiter listened to their story while standing on the beach now named after him. Eyre and Wylie stepped into the longboat and were taken back to the *Mississippi*, 'a change



in our circumstances so great, so sudden and so unexpected that it seemed more like a dream than a reality; from the solitary loneliness of the wilderness and its attendant privations, we were at once removed to all the comforts of a civilised community'. For 12 days Eyre and Wylie recuperated from the hardships of the journey on board the *Mississippi*.

destination, Frenchman Peak, nine kilometres away. Rain was threatening so I checked the compass before setting off over the plain Eyre described as 'sandy and undulating, covered principally with low shrubs'. There were a few wildflowers but it was too early for the spring explosion. I found the plain just as Eyre had, with 'low heathy plants and grass

of the afternoon but now it loomed large over my camp in the dusk.

Eyre described the weather in this area as 'exceedingly boisterous' and this was a very apt description for the rain that fell all night. It varied between heavy showers, blustery flurries and light rain. I usually find the sound of rain on the fly soothing but it was difficult to relax close to a swampy area. Waking in the night, I unzipped the inner door to check that the saucepan wasn't floating in the vestibule.

I ate breakfast looking out of the tent at the drizzle-smudged Frenchman Peak. After packing up and putting saturated boots and socks back on, an hour's walking brought me to the base of the peak.

Stashing my pack under a bush, I began the climb. The marked route traversed very steep, wet rock faces. The drizzle turned to driven rain and the wind increased. It was cold and the weather again had other ideas for my peak-bagging plans. It wasn't safe to continue. I thought I could probably climb higher but didn't know how I would get back down the slick rock. I sat on the rock, taking in the view and I picked out a much easier route than the way I had taken from Rossiter Bay. If I could have stood up without slipping over I would have kicked myself!

Sitting on the peak with the Aboriginal name Mandoorbureup, it was amazing to think that 40 million years ago it was under water, higher sea levels submerging most of the peaks in the area.

Eyre and Wylie camped on the plain near Frenchman Peak on the first night after leaving the *Mississippi*. They had a dry camp on the second night as their canteens were full of treacle from the ship's supplies!

After carefully making my way back down and finding the road, I began the six kilometre road-bash to Le Grand Beach. My walk was over. From here Eyre and Wylie had travelled another 450 kilometres to Albany. Eyre was the first mentioned in a book chapter I had read bluntly titled 'Explorers that didn't find anything'. But in Cape Le Grand he found rugged peaks, pristine beaches and a jewel-blue sea, just as I did so much later.

When I arrived back at the car park, the two whales were still at Le Grand Beach. Watching them was a memorable end to a wonderful walk. I was still in the Esperance area two days later when the weather became fine, allowing me to climb Frenchman Peak. The views were outstanding. After the walk I learned the name 'hellfire' for the two bays is said to originate from St Elmo's Fire, a bluish flame of light that sometimes occurs around the mast of a ship. Even the red fires of hell are rendered blue in Cape Le Grand. 🐋



Only a snippet at a time: whales at Le Grand Beach.

*Mississippi*. Eyre did eventually reach Thistle Cove, walking there one rainy day with the ship's French doctor.

Once rested, Eyre and Wylie recommenced their journey. The ship's blacksmith had reshod the horses using old whale harpoons. Rossiter supplied the small party with food, warm clothes and other provisions. Among the supplies were Dutch cheeses, brandy, wine, flour, rice, beef, pork, biscuits, tea, sugar and cognac. At the last minute Rossiter insisted Eyre take six bottles of wine and a tin of sardines.

Like Eyre, I left Rossiter Beach by heading across the plain behind it. I looked west to my

trees' and 'many different kinds of banksias'.

It didn't take long to recognise the vegetation that marked the wetter areas so I could steer clear of them. I did find myself wading ankle-deep on the edge of swamps filled with paperbark in a few areas, taking the only clear way through thicker growth. Kangaroos hopped away at my approach and the sound of frogs was constant.

After picking up water from a large pool I found a dry spot to set up camp. Frenchman Peak had been in the distance for most

## Noelene Proud

goes as far as possible, in Western Australia and further afield. When tent-bound by the nine-to-five she buys far too many maps.

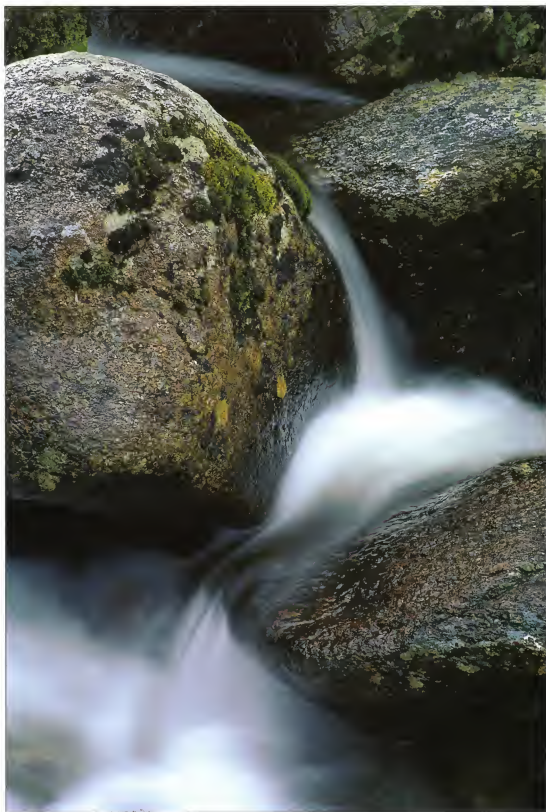


# GREAT & SMALL

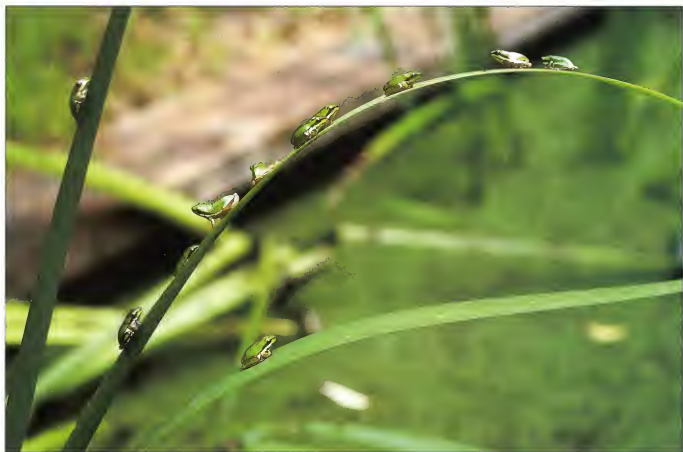
As captured by Warren Field



*The twisted, textured branches of a snow gum in Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales.*



*The Thredbo River goes about its business.*



Warren Field has been photographing national parks since he was a student in the UK. The Australian and New Zealand wilderness inspired him to emigrate to Australia in 1992. Since then he has diversified into travel photography, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. His images and stories feature regularly in high-profile journals such as *Australon Geographic*, as well as a variety of charity, outdoors and inflight magazines.

*The rubbery ribbings of an *Asplenium australasicum* fern in Sydney.*  
**Top**, eastern dwarf frogs all in a row...



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# Walking the Sunshine

Carl Roe explores a new, four-day 'Great Walk' on Brisbane's doorstep

QUEENSLAND IS NOT GENERALLY THE FIRST DESTINATION THAT POPS to mind when thinking of multiday bushwalking opportunities, but a \$10 million investment in six new 'Great Walks' is helping to change this. The fourth of these to open is the 58 kilometre Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk, which ambles along the forested Blackall Range, inland from the Sunshine Coast, less than two hours' drive north of Brisbane.

The walk traverses a tapestry of national park, conservation park and forest reserve, jumping from lush rainforest to open eucalypts regularly enough to keep life interesting. Stunning picabeen palm groves, alluring waterholes and waterfalls plunging up to 120 metres are all on display.

This walk is a welcome addition to the limited on-track, multiday bushwalking opportunities available in south-east Queensland. The Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS) has installed four new lookouts, built three new walkers' campsites and established 40 kilometres of new track; quite an achievement in a region dotted with communities and farms.

Walking the track is not a wilderness experience as it occasionally traverses patches of civilisation; however, this gives excellent vehicle access. Seven access points make it possible to divide the trip into a series of day walks, or for boots to be swapped for a monogrammed bathrobe at a romantic cottage each evening.

## When to go

The walk can be completed at any time of the year. However, summers can be uncomfortably hot and humid and winters too cold to enjoy the swimming. The best time to go is between March and May when the daytime temperatures are pleasant and there is enough water after the summer rains to clean out the waterholes.

## Safety

The track is well marked but take care at junctions, especially in Mapleton Forest Reserve where there are many places to take a wrong turn. The road sections are potentially dangerous, although QPWS is working with local authorities to install footpaths along all of these. Tank water is available at the campsites—this should be treated before drinking. During wet weather the leeches can be ferocious, so bring salt and coat socks with insect repellent. Beware of wait-a-while and stinging trees if you venture into the rainforest.

## Map

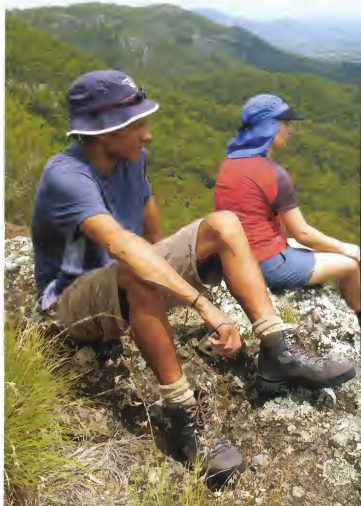
QPWS publishes the topographic map, *Great Walk: Sunshine Coast Hinterland*. This has general information and a basic track description on the back; other maps aren't necessary.

## Further reading

Visit [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au) for more information on this walk and other Queensland Great Walks. Track notes and general information about walking in the Sunshine State can be found at [www.queenslandwalks.com.au](http://www.queenslandwalks.com.au)

## Access

The walk's start is around one-and-a-half hours drive north of Brisbane. Follow the Old Bruce Highway to Landsborough and climb the range towards Maleny. Take the signposted turn to Montville



before Maleny and just before Montville turn left and follow the signs to Lake Baroon. A 19 kilometre car shuttle (each way) is required if you intend to walk from end to end. Owners of local accommodation may help with transfers if you intend to stay during or after the walk. Public transport isn't available, but it is possible to bring in a taxi from Maleny or Nambour with prior arrangement.

## Camping and accommodation

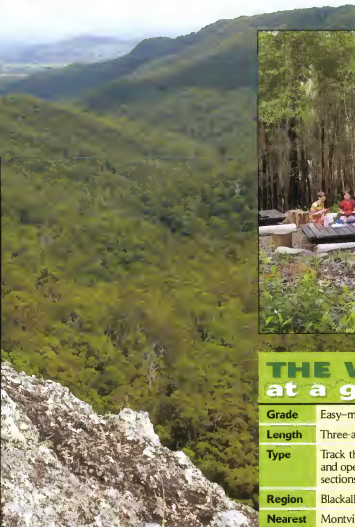
A permit is required to camp. This costs \$4 a person a night or \$16 for a family (two adults with accompanying children) and must be booked in advance. Visit [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au) or phone 13 13 04. The campsites have pit toilets, wooden platforms and tank water. Many other accommodation options are available, including cottages and bed and breakfasts.

## The walk

**Lake Baroon to Flaxton walkers' camp—16.5 kilometres**  
Only 300 metres from the car park at Lake Baroon, the walk's start, is a short sidetrack that leads to arguably the best waterholes of the entire walk. These are worth exploring. The track continues through the rainforest, soon crossing a meandering boardwalk in-



# Coast hinterland



## THE WALK at a glance

<b>Grade</b>	Easy-medium
<b>Length</b>	Three-and-a-half days
<b>Type</b>	Track through rainforest and open forest with occasional sections of suburbia
<b>Region</b>	Blackall Range, Queensland
<b>Nearest town</b>	Montville or Mapleton
<b>Start, finish</b>	Lake Baroon, Delicia Road
<b>Map</b>	QPWS Great Walk: Sunshine Coast Hinterland 1:25 000
<b>Special points</b>	Prebook campsites. Take care on road sections. Be prepared for leeches during wet weather

*Ubjee walkers' camp, complete with wooden platforms, pit toilet and tank water. Paradise! Left, Adam Gietzelt (left) and Michelle Roe take in the 'best view of the walk' from Gheerulla viewing point. All photos by the author*

stalled to protect the habitat of the rare hippo-pocket frog (*Assa darlingtoni*). Two sidetracks to lookouts are reached within the first two kilometres and both are worth visiting. The first offers an intimate view into the narrows of Obi Obi Gorge; the second, a panoramic vista high above the creek. The track eventually descends to Flat Rock, a sunny morning-tea spot by the creek.

The track continues above Obi Obi Creek, passing through some long patches of lantana cut back by QPWS. A degraded section near the junction of Obi Obi and Skene creeks is mercifully short, quickly giving way to a stunning palm grove dotted with strangler figs, the trunks of which are often latticed and hollow inside. After a further 15 minutes, and a short climb, turn left on to the Kondalilla Falls circuit walk. Almost immediately after crossing Skene Creek a short sidetrack to the base of the falls is worth a look. There are intermittent views of the 80 metre high Kondalilla Falls (meaning 'rushing water') as the track climbs to the top pool, where visitors escaping the coastal fleshpots cool off. This is a great lunch spot with excellent swimming.

Continue for 15 minutes to the main picnic area and beyond to the bitumen road where you are only a short walk from the

numerous accommodation options around Montville. Follow the road up the hill along the footpath where possible. Turn left on to busy Montville-Mapleton Road. At the time of writing there wasn't a footpath for the ten-minute walk north to Flaxton Mill Road. Turn left on to Flaxton Mill Road and continue for 1.7 kilometres to a stile on the right. Flaxton walkers' camp is 1.2 kilometres into the forest reserve. It has small sites tucked away in the rainforest.

## Day two

### Flaxton walkers' camp to Ubjee walkers' camp—13.1 kilometres

This second day will test your walking muscles early. From the campsite the track descends 235 metres to Baxter Creek before climbing 240 metres back out of the valley on the opposite side. A short sidetrack halfway along takes you to the cascading Baxter Falls and a nice swimming hole. The track crosses the creek downstream of the falls by way of a swing-bridge—a rare sight in Queensland—before the ascent.

The climb brings you to quiet Suses Pocket Road after less than an hour's walk. Turn right here. After a couple of minutes you pass the Obilo Lodge B&B before cresting a rise and reaching Obi Obi

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Road. A pleasant 30-minute stroll along suburban footpaths leads to Mapleton Falls car park, where a lookout gives a vertigo-inducing view of Mapleton Falls dropping 120 metres into the valley below. Look for Australian peregrine falcons, which nest near the falls in August and September.

Rejoin the Great Walk on the Wompoo Circuit. The track continues on a meandering route northward to cross the gravel Delicia Road and arrive at a covered track head about 40 minutes after leaving the falls. This makes a great lunch spot if it is raining.

Although the next 5.9 kilometre section looks straightforward on the map, there are numerous sidetracks and four-wheel-drive roads that could send day-dreaming walkers astray. The route is well signposted as it winds its way through the most stunning palm grove of the walk, before entering Mapleton Forest Reserve (soon to be a national park) and following a wide track to Ubajee walkers' camp. The campsite is on top of a ridge above the Gheerulla valley and catches the cooling breezes. The nearby lookout is the perfect place for a glass of wine at sunset.

### Day three

#### Ubajee walkers' camp to Thilba Thalba walkers' camp—13.5 kilometres

From the campsite the track descends into the Gheerulla valley

*The lovely swimming hole at Baxter Falls.*



towards the lower end of the valley although some of the best pools can be tricky to access.

About one-and-a-half hours from the T-junction the track joins a four-wheel-drive road. Continue for about 20 minutes to a campsite with picnic tables on the opposite side of the creek. This is Gheerulla recreation area—a nice lunch spot midweek when there are fewer trail bikes. To reach the campsite follow a steep track, then wade across the end of the main pool and head left to the best waterhole. The climb to camp can be thirsty work and Gheerulla recreation area is the last place to top up your water.

Once back on the main route five minutes' walk brings you to a signposted junction. Turn left and begin a 340 metre ascent, which can be stiflingly hot in the early afternoon, through scribbly-gum woodland studded with grass trees to Thilba Thalba viewing point where there are cool breezes and panoramic views. An easy ridgeline ramble from here takes you to camp in less than 30 minutes. The breeziest campsites are on the ridge's eastern side and there is a lookout close by.

### Day four

#### Thilba Thalba walkers' camp to Delicia Road—7.7 kilometres

The track officially ends at the Mapleton day-use area although this requires five kilometres of backtracking. The most convenient place to stop to avoid this is where the track crosses Delicia Road before descending north back to Gheerulla Falls. This section takes only two hours to walk, with lunch in Mapleton being a good finish to the walk.

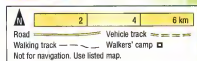
Pick up the wide track that dissects the campsite—almost immediately it veers left on to a narrower walking track. The route contours just below the ridgeline, crossing a four-wheel-drive track after seven minutes and reaching a sidetrack to Gheerulla viewing point (signposted but not marked on the walk map) after about 40 minutes. The best view of the walk is from here, making this a nice morning-tea spot if it's not too hot.

After a further 20 minutes there are pleasant views from the edge of the escarpment. You soon reach a left turn and the track begins contouring through patches of rainforest and lantana-choked gullies. Delicia Road is reached about an hour from Gheerulla viewing point. The track crosses the road and then descends along the cutting of the original pioneers' track, known locally as the Hindi Track. A steep, mountain-bike track runs parallel to this and is busy with helmeted thrill seekers on weekends. Cross Delicia Road to the locked gate, the end of the walk. 🚫

Carl Roe is a full-time adventure writer and product reviewer who lives in Brisbane. He has walked extensively in Australia and overseas including two long-distance walks (Canada–Mexico and Sweden–Spain) spanning more than 15 months and covering 11 600 kilometres.



### The Sunshine Coast hinterland





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# A tent for **all** seasons

*Jim Graham finds a home among the gum trees...*

## Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

THE MAIN TREND IN MODERN TENT DEVELOPMENT mirrors that of other bushwalking equipment—lighter is better. Research and development continue to yield materials that are lighter in weight without necessarily sacrificing strength or durability. In tents this has been particularly evident in the use of siliconised fibres and waterproof, breathable fabrics. Tent shapes that provide maximum efficiency of space and strength while using minimum amounts of fabric and poles also produce weight savings. Since the last tent survey (*Wild* no 96) further developments in single-skin tents have produced significant weight reductions through the use of less material for a given internal volume. Eliminating the need for a separate inner and outer tent has meant less weight, less packed volume and often less set-up time (see box on page 63). As all models in the survey are manufactured offshore, the country listed after the brand name in the table is the country of design.

## Intended capacity

Sharing a tent is the easiest way to reduce the amount of weight and volume you will carry. There will be times when this isn't possible but if the weight of a tent is shared between two, it is effectively halved. Bring

a third member in and the weight is further reduced although there will be drawbacks in terms of ease of entry and exit, access to gear and actual sleeping space. The main focus of this survey is on two-person tents, as for most bushwalking duties these are the most user-friendly.



*The Sierra Designs Electron: a dome tent that even has an attic!*

## Design/shape

Some modern designs blur the lines between traditional shapes. However, it is generally recognised that a dome tent has crossing poles and the entrance or entrances along the long side of the inner. The poles in a tunnel tent don't cross and entry is

*Maybe we should upgrade? Tibetan nomads admire Katie Reid's tent on the High Plateau, western Tibet. Greg Cair*



from the narrow side of the inner. A tunnel dome uses the crossing poles of a dome tent but has the entry on the narrow side of the inner. Single-pole models are also available, with pegs and guys used to maintain the stability of the structure.

## Season

Manufacturers or distributors provided these figures as a guide to the intended usage of the tents. The season rating reflects the strength and durability of the materials used in each tent's construction, as well as the stability given by the design and shape. The ratings range from two-season tents suitable for use from early spring to late autumn, to four-season models that should withstand winter use.

## Maximum internal dimensions

The measurements in this column were provided by manufacturers/distributors. Since they are maximum values and some of the floors are irregular in shape they should be

treated with caution and as a guide only. Examine the actual floor space with sleeping mats in place, also checking for headroom when sitting up in the middle of the tent.

## Total weight

Weight is usually a key factor when it comes to choosing a tent. There can often be variation between batches of the same model so weigh the tent yourself to ensure an accurate figure. The weights provided in this column are maximum packed weights and care has been taken to check the values quoted by the distributors with the specifications listed on Internet sites and product catalogues. (Some sources give minimum weights that leave out important items such as stuff sacks, pegs, guy ropes and repair kits.) Individuals are then

free to select what they want to leave behind in order to reduce the actual weight carried.

## Number of poles

The first number shows how many full-length, ground-to-ground poles there are, with the second number (after the +, where applicable) showing the number of shorter, non load-bearing poles. These usually hold up the vestibule's top, improving access and

*The Snowgum Caddis is a tunnel tent designed for four-season use.*



## Tents for bushwalking

	Intended capacity, people	Design/shape	Season	Maximum internal dimensions, length x width x height	Total weight, kilograms	No of poles	No of poles, min-max	No of vestibules	No of fly entrances	Roominess	Ease of pitch	Stability	Access	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
<b>Bibler USA</b> <a href="http://www.blackdiamondequipment.com">www.blackdiamondequipment.com</a>																
I-Tent	2	TD	4	208 x 123 x 107	2.2 (0.6)	2	0-8	Opt	1	●●1/2	●●●	●●●●	●●1/2	●1/2	Single skin (breathable ToddTex); vestibule available separately	1050
Tempest	2	TD	4	221 x 147 x 113	3.3	4	2-10	2	2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	Single skin (breathable ToddTex)	1150
Ahwahee 2	2	D	4	221 x 130 x 109	3.0 (0.6)	2+1	0-8	Opt	2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●●	●1/2	Single skin (breathable ToddTex); vestibules (two) available separately	1250
<b>Black Diamond USA</b> <a href="http://www.blackdiamondequipment.com">www.blackdiamondequipment.com</a>																
Firstlight	2	TD	3	208 x 123 x 107	1.5 (0.6)	2	0-8	Opt	1	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	Single skin (breathable Epic); vestibule available separately	620
Lighthouse	2	D	3	221 x 130 x 109	1.7 (0.6)	3	0-8	Opt	1	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●●	●●	Single skin (breathable Epic); vestibules (two) available separately	750
Skylight	3	TD	3	224 x 175 x 130	2.3	3	0-8	1	1	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●	Single skin (breathable Epic); roll-back canopy for star-gazing	860
<b>Black Wolf Australia</b> <a href="http://www.blackwolf.com.au">www.blackwolf.com.au</a>																
Cocoon Bivy	1	T	2-3	205 x 96 x 50	1.1	3	5-7	na	1	●	●●	●●1/2	●	●●		130
Mantis II	2	D	2-3	250 x 140 x 100	2.3	2	8-12	2	2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●		230
<b>Exped Switzerland</b> <a href="http://www.exped.com">www.exped.com</a>																
Onion Extreme	2	D	3	205 x 120 x 130	3.7	3	0-12	2	2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●●	●●	Fly can be pitched as a free-standing shelter	800
<b>Kathmandu New Zealand</b> <a href="http://www.kathmandu.com.au">www.kathmandu.com.au</a>																
Aspre	2	TD	2	220 x 110 x 110	2.5	2	2-6	2	2	●●	●●1/2	●●	●●1/2	●●1/2		480
Crisalpine	2	D	3	220 x 130 x 105	3.3	2	2-6	2	2	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●		500
Northstar Plus 2	2	TD	4	230 x 135 x 106	3.2	3	6-10	1	1	●●	●●	●●●1/2	●●	●●1/2		700
<b>Macpac New Zealand</b> <a href="http://www.marpac.co.nz">www.marpac.co.nz</a>																
Apollo	2	D	2-3	210 x 130 x 115	3.4	2	2-12	2	2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		500
Microlight	1	SP	3	220 x 130 x 100	1.8	1	4-8	1	1	●●1/2	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	Can be pitched fly first or inner and fly together	500
Olympus	2-3	T	4	220 x 135 x 115	3.4	3	4-18	1	2	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●1/2		900
<b>Marmot USA</b> <a href="http://www.marmot.com">www.marmot.com</a>																
Early Light	2	D	3	223 x 137 x 99	2.4	2	2-6	2	2	●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●		380
Hypno	2	D	3	236 x 147 x 106	2.5	3	2-6	2	2	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2		700
Swallow 2	2	D	4	245 x 150 x 105	3.4	3	4-12	2	2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●1/2		800



storage capacity. All tents in this survey have aluminium shock-corded poles. In the past, manufacturers have experimented by reducing the number or size of the poles used in their tent's design and this tended to compromise the internal volume and stability. The best designs now incorporate extremely lightweight poles.

## Number of pegs

The minimum number enables the full structure to be pegged out, with vestibules open. The maximum number secures all peg and guy points.

## Number of vestibules

This column indicates the number of unroofed areas that can be used for gear storage. Placement and size of the vestibules should be considered as some are actually quite small and even a minimal amount of stored gear would severely restrict access.

## Number of fly entrances

This column indicates the number of external doors in the tent fly. As in the previous column, size and placement of the

doors is just as important as the number of them as this is likely to affect ventilation, ease of access and the amount of rain that can potentially enter the inner when the fly is open.

## Roominess

This is a subjective rating. Points have been allocated according to the amount of space available for the number of people for which the tent is designed, as listed under capacity. Gear storage has also been considered in this assessment. For this reason, a one-person tent should only be compared with other one-person tents. Where manufacturers have provided a range for intended capacity (for example, two-three people) I have considered the tent as belonging to the smaller category. The internal height has also been considered. In some cases, tapering of the floor shape is quite restrictive.



*The Bibler I-Tent: a single-skin shelter.*

## Tents for bushwalking continued

	Intended capacity, people	Design/shape	Season	Maximum internal dimensions, length x width x height	Total weight, kilograms	No of poles	No of pegs, min-max	No of vestibules	No of fly entrances	Roominess	Ease of pitch	Stability	Access	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
<b>Mountain Designs Australia</b> <a href="http://www.mountaindesigns.com.au">www.mountaindesigns.com.au</a>																
Plateau	2	D	3	210 x 140 x 115	3	2	2-10	2	2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	●●●		470
Neutrino 2	2	T	3	220 x 130 x 105	1.6	2	4-8	1	1	●●/2	●●/2	●●	●●/2	●●/2		500
Peak	2	D	4	215 x 145 x 115	3.7	3	2-10	1	2	●●●/2	●●/2	●●●/2	●●●/2	●●●	Can be pitched fly first or inner and fly together	600
<b>Mountain Hardwear USA</b> <a href="http://www.mountainhardwear.com">www.mountainhardwear.com</a>																
Light Wedge 2	2	T	2	240 x 140 x 109	2.8	2+1	6-10	1	1	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●/2	●●●		400
Airjet 2	2	T	3	218 x 138 x 99	2	2+1	6-8	1	2	●●/2	●●●	●●●/2	●●/2	●●●/2	Single skin (siliconised nylon)	600
<b>MSR USA</b> <a href="http://www.msrgear.com">www.msrgear.com</a>																
Fling	2	T	3	200 x 170 x 100	1.8	3	8	1	1	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●		415
Mutha Hubba	3	T	3	210 x 170 x 120	3.3	3	6-10	2	2	●●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●●	●●/2	Fly can be pitched as a free-standing shelter	820
<b>Salewa Italy</b> <a href="http://www.salewa.com">www.salewa.com</a>																
Micro	1	D	3	212 x 120 x 102	2.3	2	3-10	1	1	●●●/2	●●●	●●/2	●●●/2	●●●/2		330
Sierra Leone II	2	D	4	235 x 155 x 108	3.6	2+1	2-12	2	2	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	●●●/2		500
Sierra Ultra	2	D	4	225 x 145 x 100	2.8	2+1	2-12	2	2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●/2		570
<b>Sea to Summit Australia</b> <a href="http://www.seatosummit.com.au">www.seatosummit.com.au</a>																
Dart 2	2	D	3	245 x 140 x 110	3	3	0-6	2	2	●●●	●●/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	Siliconised polyester; fly also available in heavier but cheaper ripstop polyester	500
Second Arrow Ultralight	2	T	4	200 x 120 x 102	2.6	2	3-10	1	2	●/2	●●	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	As above	600
First Arrow Ultralight	3	T	4	220 x 160 x 120	3.3	3	3-12	2	3	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●/2	As above	795
<b>Sierra Designs USA</b> <a href="http://www.sierradesigns.com">www.sierradesigns.com</a>																
Light Year	1	T	3	287 x 111 x 97	1.5	2	3-13	1	1	●●●	●●/2	●●/2	●●	●●●		280
Clip Flashlight	2	T	3	226 x 147 x 109	2	2	6-13	1	1	●●	●●/2	●●	●●	●●●		350
Electron	2	D	3	226 x 139 x 106	2.3	2+1	2-14	2	2	●●/2	●●/2	●●	●●●	●●●/2	Includes footprint, two coffee slings, attic	400
<b>Snowgum Australia</b> <a href="http://www.snowgum.com.au">www.snowgum.com.au</a>																
Flash 2P	2	T	3	235 x 132 x 105	2.4	2	4-10	0	2	●●/2	●●/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		330
Storm Shelter 2P	2	D	4	215 x 145 x 117	2.8	2+1	4-12	2	2	●●/2	●●●	●●●	●●●/2	●●●		350
Caddis 2+P	2-3	T	4	235 x 170 x 110	3	3	4-16	2	2	●●●●	●●●/2	●●●/2	●●/2	●●●●		400

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Design/shape: Dome with entrance on long side, SP single pole, TD dome or tunnel with crossing poles, entrance on short side, Tunnel with entrance on short side Total weight: figures in brackets indicate the additional weight of one vestibule Number of poles: number of full-length, ground-to-ground poles; number after + is shorter, non load-bearing poles Number of vestibules: Optional vestibules available Bibler I-Tent and Ahwahnee 2, Black Diamond Firstlight and Lighthouse and Mountain Hardwear Airjet 2 are single-skin tents, doors are inner only na not applicable † not seen by surveyor The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are designed

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## Ease of pitch

This rating is also subjective and has been based on the surveyor's experience with different designs. It reflects how quickly and easily the complete structure can be erected, with consideration given to keeping the floor dry in inclement weather. Some multi-pitch designs allow the fly to be put up first so that the inner can remain dry whilst being attached from the inside.

There are many methods of inserting poles, attaching the inner and securing the fly: clips, sleeves, tabs, twist-locks and eyelets

## Buy right

- Roominess:** place some sleeping mats inside the tent and lie down. Check how much space is left between the mats and the walls. Sit up and test for roof clearance.
- Stability:** locate a pole at the top of the tent and first shake it, then squash down on it. How well does the tent retain its shape?
- Ventilation:** find the size and position of vents. Make sure that they will remain open when wet and will not allow rain to enter.
- Access:** how easy is it to get in to the inner tent? Consider how this might change in poor weather, when sharing and with gear in the vestibule.
- Pitch:** practise erecting and dismantling your short-listed models and compare ease of pitch and packed volume.
- Fly:** check how taut this can be made, looking for valleys and troughs. A taut fly will shed rain more readily and will be less likely to flap in the wind or push against the inner.
- Versatility:** check whether the tent can be pitched inner and/or fly only. This provides greater versatility for light-weight adventures or warm-climate walks.

are just some of them. Not all of these are user-friendly, especially with cold hands in the rain. Threading poles through sleeves can be awkward, especially if the sleeves are narrow. The poles must be pushed very carefully so that the pole sections remain tightly together. They can come apart slightly but be hidden in the sleeve and, when bent into shape, could potentially pierce the fly. The extra care taken to prevent this adds to the time taken to pitch the tent. Over time the friction of pole ends rubbing against fabric sleeves can also cause fraying, leading to the need for repairs. However, pole sleeves are a very stable method of attachment.

To a degree, clips alleviate these problems as the poles are generally open to view and the sections can be scanned for problems before the pole is bent into position. However, clips are generally plastic and can become brittle over time, leading to breakage. Velcro tabs for securing the fly to the poles are used in some designs and I have found

# Single-skin tents

Greg Caire outlines the pros and cons

The concept of a single-skin shelter has been around since the dawn of recreational mountaineering and bushwalking. From bivvy bags to proofed cotton japa A-frame tents such as the Paddy Pallin Jenolan, the design of outdoor shelters remained single-layered (with the occasional use of a fly to shed really heavy weather) until the emergence of the Moss two-layer, geodesic-dome tents in the late 1960s. The first single-layer shelters were simple cotton bags that mountaineers draped over their heads while sitting out the biting cold on cramped bivvy ledges, or traditional A-frame 'pup' tents that early mountaineers such as George Mallory and his team used on Mt Everest in 1924.

Today's single-skin designs are a far cry from these early developments technically; however, the overall principles remain the same. Single-skin shelters can either be breathable (allowing the passage of moisture) or non-breathable. The simplest and lightest designs are produced using non-breathable materials such as polyurethane-coated nylon or polyester, or ultralight fabrics such as siliconised nylon and polyester.

Developments in this area were given a boost by Ray Jardine and his book *Beyond Backpacking*, published in 2000, which espoused an extremely lightweight approach. The movement also led to a renewed interest in the humble tarp tent—the purest form of single-skin shelter—which continues today. Companies such as Black Diamond have been making these tarp-style shelters for more than 30 years and have developed them into highly stable shelters that can be used in all weather, pitched with either a central aluminium pole or trekking poles.

Increasingly manufacturers are refining non-breathable single-skin designs to satisfy consumer demands for ever lighter shelters. Compared to traditional, two-layer tents, these can be less durable and strong in the interest of saving weight. However, the latter designs from companies like Black Diamond, GoLite, Macpac, Marmot, Mountain Hardwear, MSR and The North Face are amazingly robust for their weight.

One of the problems of non-breathable single-skin tents is condensation. To prevent excess moisture build-up, it is critical that these shelters have good ventilation. However, a well-ventilated single-skin tent can cause less condensation problems than a double-skin tent, which tends to trap moisture in the inner tent, leaving the user with a heavy, wet bundle to stow away and carry.

The second approach to single-skin tents is to make the tent walls out of one of the many breathable fabrics now available. These designs are often very robust, designed for four-season and mountaineering use, such as the Bibler range. Some of these tents compromise comfort to save weight—they may be narrow and pokey.

The Hennessy Hammock is another to take on single-skin shelters. These one-person shelters incorporate a lightweight hammock that is cut to allow a comfortable sleeping position, and a covering fly to shed rain.

Despite some wild and wacky designs concocted in the interest of shedding weight and bulk, single-skin shelters are here to stay. Many of the manufacturers make very usable and effective shelters, particularly for three-season use.

practical nor possible—an objective stability rating would require wind-tunnel testing.

Instead, the surveyor used his real-world experience in the field with various tent designs and shapes.

Since all tents in this survey were seen fully erected it was possible to do a simple 'shake and squash' test to see how well the structure withstood loading, how taut the fly could be made and how well the poles retained their shape. Consideration was also given to how each structure could best be orientated in order to withstand high winds. Some designs also incorporate additional guy ropes, which enhance stability—this was rewarded with a higher rating.

## Access

Another subjective rating, this time reflecting how easy I found it to enter and leave the tent. Dome designs tend to have higher entrances that are easier to use, especially when two or more people need to enter.

The more user friendly designs have a separate entry for each person with a vestibule area that allows gear to be stored without completely blocking the entrance. Some lower, tunnel designs required crawling on hands and knees in order to enter or exit the tent.

## Value

Finally each tent was subjectively rated according to how well it performed in the other criteria compared to the recommended retail price. The weight of the tent and the quality of materials used were also considered. Caution should be applied when making an assessment based solely on price as some models in the table would not be suitable in snow conditions and would not handle extreme winds very well. Consumers should carefully consider the conditions in which they expect to use their tent and check their selection against the season rating and stability score in the table.

All ratings have been made with bushwalking in mind. Mountaineers, touring cyclists and skiers would probably have requirements that have not been considered for this survey.

## Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Caribee	Clipper	(02) 9310 8302
Coleman	Coleman Brands	1800 224 350
DMH	DMH Australia	(03) 9587 9366
Doite	MB Wrang	(03) 9310 4696
Eureka		<a href="http://www.eurekatent.com">www.eurekatent.com</a>
Force 10	Anso	<a href="http://www.ansco.com.au">www.ansco.com.au</a>
GoLite	Multi-Sport Imports	(07) 3892 1155
Lafuma	Adventure Extreme	(02) 4966 1377
Millet	Adventure Extreme	(02) 4966 1377
Roman	Roman Camping	<a href="http://www.roman.com.au">www.roman.com.au</a>
The North Face	True Alliance	(02) 9698 6555
Vango	Anso	<a href="http://www.ansco.com.au">www.ansco.com.au</a>
Vaude	Rucac Supplies	(02) 6686 3388
Wild Country	Ray's Outdoors	<a href="http://www.raysoutdoors.com.au">www.raysoutdoors.com.au</a>

Jim Graham frequently gets to field test and compare a range of products through his roles as an outdoors educator and Duke of Edinburgh Award Coordinator. Bushwalking remains his passion. The New Zealand wilderness is his favourite classroom.

This survey was refereed by Alastair McGhie.



Kathmandu's Aspre is an example of a tunnel dome tent.

this to be a faster method. I don't have experience with twist-locks in the field but any exclusive hardware places restrictions on the availability of repairs.

## Stability

For the purposes of this survey, comparative testing in identical conditions was neither



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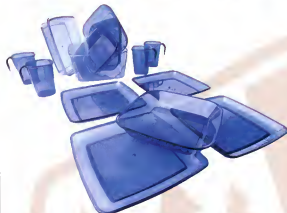


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# The synthetic way...

John Chapman surveys synthetic sleeping bags

## Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 59)

**SYNTHETIC SLEEPING BAGS HAVE TRADITIONALLY** been the choice for those with limited budgets or keen on sports where being soaked is normal, such as canoeing and canyoning. Synthetic bags have a number of advantages as they are usually cheap, easy to wash, dry fast, stay reasonably warm when wet and are non-allergenic. On the negative side they are usually not as light or compressible as their down counterparts. This weight and volume difference might not matter on short trips but for expedition-length trips, where every bit of weight and volume counts, synthetic bags may be unsuitable.

One common misunderstanding is that synthetic bags are warm when soaked. From experience, I would describe them as tolerable when wet—water evaporation does cool you—but body heat will quickly dry the bag and it will return to normal over several hours. On the other hand, a saturated down sleeping bag is two sheets of material with very little in between—it doesn't offer much warmth. If you expect to get soaked regularly then a synthetic sleeping bag should be seriously considered.

This survey covers synthetic sleeping bags suitable for a wide range of bushwalking that are available in specialist outdoors re-

tailers in major capital cities. Some of the manufacturers make a large range of models: where possible, bags suitable for different seasons have been selected for each manufacturer.

## Season

This indicates the number of seasons for which the sleeping bag is suitable, and has either been provided by the manufacturer or, when not provided, chosen by the surveyor. In reality there aren't typical climatic areas in Australia so this rating is for the conditions in popular walking areas in south-east Australia at night. A two-season rating indicates that the bag is only suitable for mild nights of 10°C or warmer. Many of this class of bag can be used as booster bags, where the bag is placed inside or over another sleeping bag to increase warmth. Sleeping bags with a three-season rating are intended for nights down to around 5°C, while

the four-season rating should keep most users comfortable to around freezing. Four-season bags are suitable for occasional use in the snow but for regular snow trips a 4+ sleeping bag is recommended.

The season rating is a general guide only, as metabolism, body shape and comfortable sleeping temperature vary widely from person to person.

## Shape

Mummy bags mimic the shape of the human body and are the most efficient in terms of insulation. Some people find this style of bag restrictive and, as they generally can't be opened right out, they are also less suitable for warmer conditions. The tapered-rectangular shape is the most popular as it is simple to manufacture, reasonably efficient in insulation and easier

**Right, Mont's EVO Super: a tapered-rectangular bag with all the trimmings. Below, if you're really tired, you can sleep anywhere, in anything!** Pete Mills demonstrates at Western Wall, the Grampians, Victoria. Greg Caire



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**Vango**

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to open up and use as a doona in warm conditions. Rectangular bags are designed more for general camping and travel and are less popular for bushwalking as they are heavier and bulkier than an equivalent tapered-rectangular bag.

### Buy right

- If you are a warm sleeper you may be able to use bags rated lower than those for your intended use. If you sleep cold, choose a bag with high loft.
- Tapered-rectangular bags are most suitable for use in a wide range of temperatures. If you are a cold sleeper, choose a mummy-shaped bag.
- Make sure that the bag fits. Take your shoes off, slip inside the bag and ensure that it is the right size for your body. While most bags are similar in size, some are shorter or narrower than others. If a bag fits too tightly the insulation becomes compressed and you will have cold spots. Conversely, if it's too loose there will be more air for you to heat and you will feel colder than in a more firmly fitting bag.
- Get a sleeping bag liner. This will add a small amount of warmth and reduce the need for frequent bag washing. Liners are much easier to wash than sleeping bags!

### Fill

These details were supplied from manufacturer's literature or tags and list the brand/type of fill used and the fill weight in grams per square metre (where available). Heavier weights are usually made from several layers of lighter fill. Fill details were not available for all brands: in this case, only the fill type is given.

### Internal construction

Light bags are similar in construction to doonas: the insulation is sewn to either the inner or outer layer. To reduce the loss of heat through the stitches, these bags usually keep seams to a minimum by using wide sheets of fill. Bags of this style have been described as being of single-layer construction. Some of the heavier-weight bags that use multiple layers of fill have also been described as single layer as these bags also have the layers sewn together and fixed to either the inside or



*The Mountain  
Designs Innominata,  
an example of a mummy-style bag.*



## Synthetic sleeping bags

Season	Shape	Fill	Internal construction	Total weight, kilograms	Left height, centimetres	Compressed size, centimetres	Outer fabric	Zip	Survivor's choice	Comments	Approx. price, \$	
Black Wolf China <a href="http://www.blackwolf.com.au">www.blackwolf.com.au</a>												
Micron 7	2	TR	125 gsm Powerloft 3D	Single layer	1.1	4	15 x 30	Nylon	2 T	●●●	80	
Micron 3	3	TR	175 gsm Powerloft 3D	As above	1.2	4	16 x 32	Nylon	2 T	●●●●	85	
Compact Super	4	TR	300 gsm Thermolite Plus	Double layer, quilted	1.75	4	20 x 35	Nylon	2 T	●●●1/2	Neck muff	130
Domex New Zealand <a href="http://www.domex.co.nz">www.domex.co.nz</a>												
Bushmate	4	M	200 gsm Spirolift	Double layer, quilted	1.85	7	20 x 25	Nylon	1 T	●●●●	140	
Fairlydown China												
Lightning Lite	2	TR	Thermolite Extra	Single layer	1.3	3	18 x 35	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●	130	
Bushwalker	3+	TR	Qualofil	Double layer, quilted	1.9	5	23 x 35	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●●	150	
Kathmandu China <a href="http://www.kathmandu.com.au">www.kathmandu.com.au</a>												
Globe V3	3	TR	Thermastat Qualofil: 300 gsm (top), 150 gsm (base)	Double-layer top, quilted, single-layer base	1.8	5	22 x 35	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●●	XL available; neck muff	170
Odyssey V3	2	TR	Primaloft One: 100 gsm (top), 60 gsm (base)	Single layer	1.05	2	16 x 30	Nylon	2, 5 T	●	As above	270
Quest V2	4	M	Primaloft One: 266 gsm (top), 133 gsm (base)	Double-layer top, quilted, single-layer base	1.65	6	22 x 40	Nylon	1 T	●	XL available	470
Mont China <a href="http://www.mont.com.au">www.mont.com.au</a>												
EVO Ultra Light	2	TR	Micro synthetic	Single layer	0.95	3	13 x 31	Nylon	2 T	●●●	Radiant heat barrier	140
EVO Super	3	TR	Polarguard 3D	Double layer, shingle	1.7	6	19 x 43	Nylon	2 T	●●●	XL available; neck muff; radiant heat barrier	210
EVO Extreme	4	M	As above	As above	1.9	9	20 x 47	Nylon	2 T	●●●1/2	As above	260
Mountain Designs China <a href="http://www.mountaindesigns.com">www.mountaindesigns.com</a>												
Wanderer 200	2	R	200 gsm hollow core polyester	Double layer, quilted	1.45	3	15 x 36	Polyester	2 T	●●	Other fill weights available	100
Acrobat 225	3+	TR	Microthermic polyester: 225 gsm (top), 100 gsm (base)	Single layer	1.55	4	15 x 38	Siltex	2 T	●●	Available with 150 gsm fill; neck muff	200
Innominate	3+	M	100 gsm Primaloft	Double layer, quilted	1.35	5	18 x 36	Siltex	2 T	●●●	Neck muff	250
Mountain Equipment China <a href="http://www.mountain-equipment.co.uk">www.mountain-equipment.co.uk</a>												
Sleepwalker UL	2	M	Polarloft	Single layer	0.9	4	18 x 30	Nylon	1 T	●●1/2	XL available	180
Sleepwalker I	3	M	Polarloft	Double-layer shingle top, single-layer base	1.1	6	22 x 33	Nylon	1 T	●●●●	XL available; neck muff	190
Sleepwalker II	3+	M	Polarloft	Double layer, shingle	1.4	6	22 x 37	Nylon	1 T	●●●1/2	As above	200
Paddy Pallin China <a href="http://www.paddypallin.com.au">www.paddypallin.com.au</a>												
Traveller	2	TR	Powerloft 3D hollow core	Single layer	0.9	2	14 x 25	Nylon	2 T	●●		100
Trail	3	TR	As above	As above	1.2	3	17 x 30	Nylon	2 T	●●1/2		110
Trek	3+	TR	As above	As above	1.75	6	18 x 33	Nylon	2 T	●●●1/2		130
Roman China <a href="http://www.roman.com.au">www.roman.com.au</a>												
Extreme Lite	2	TR	Insulift Thermo Bonded	Single layer	1.2	2	14 x 30	Nylon	2 T	●●		120
Palm IV	2	TR	Invista Thermastat Micro	As above	0.9	3	13 x 26	Nylon	2 T	●●1/2		130
Trek Advance	3+	TR	Invista Thermastat Extra	Double layer, quilted	1.8	6	22 x 38	Nylon	2 T	●●●1/2	Neck muff; wide shoulders; sleeping mat sleeves	170
Snowgum China <a href="http://www.snowgum.com.au">www.snowgum.com.au</a>												
Micro Traveller Full Zip	2	TR	Thermofit: 150 gsm (top), 75 gsm (base)	Double-layer top, quilted, single-layer base	0.85	3	13 x 28	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●●1/2	Half-zip model available	100
Sturt	3	TR	Qualofil: 300 gsm (top), 150 gsm (base)	As above	1.45	5	21 x 36	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●●1/2		130
Leichardt	3+	TR	300 gsm Qualofil	Double layer, quilted	1.8	6	23 x 36	Nylon	2, 5 T	●●●●	Neck muff	160
Snuggpak China <a href="http://www.snuggpak.com">www.snuggpak.com</a>												
The Sleeping Bag	3	M	Insulift polyester	Double layer, quilted	1.7	5	19 x 33	Nylon	1 T	●●●1/2	Neck muff; radiant heat barrier	90
Softie Chrysalis Micro	2	M	Softie polyester	Single layer	1	3	14 x 29	Nylon	1 T	●	Radiant heat barrier	220
Softie Chrysalis Winter	3+	M	As above	Double layer, quilted	1.95	4	21 x 38	Nylon	1 T	●●	Neck muff; radiant heat barrier	290
Vango China <a href="http://www.vango.co.uk">www.vango.co.uk</a>												
Nitestar 250	2+	M	250 gsm hollow core	Double layer, quilted	1.85	4	21 x 38	Nylon	1 T	●●●●	Other fill weights available	80
Ultralite II 700	2	M	80 gsm Insulite Superfine	Single layer	1	3	16 x 27	Nylon	1 T	●●●		120
Summit 5000	3+	M	Insulite Superfine: 280 gsm (top), 200 gsm (base)	Triple layer, shingle	1.9	5	22 x 28	Nylon	1 T	●●●●	Other fill weights available	200

● poor  
base of bag  
(sewn)

●● average  
Zips: 1 zip, 2 zips,  
Single zip slide, Twin zip slides

●●● good  
Shape: Mummy,  
Rectangular, TR tapered rectangular

●●●● excellent  
f: not seen by referee

Fill: gsm grams/square metre  
The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the sleeping bags are made

Internal construction: unless specified, this relates to top

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Shape: Mummy, Rectangular, TR tapered rectangular Fill: gsm grams/square metre Internal construction: unless specified, this relates to top and base of bag Zips: 1 zip, 2 zips, Single zip side, Twin zip sides † not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the sleeping bags are made (seen)

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## Insulation and fill

Sleeping bags keep you warm at night by trapping air. The role of the insulation is to retain a layer of still air around your body. Factors that affect the efficiency of this insulation are the fibres, how the fibres are connected into sheets and also how these sheets are sewn together to form the insulation layer.

Many mass of fine fibres can trap air: wool, straw and other materials have been used for centuries with great success. Of course, these materials are heavy, bulky or both and walkers are keen to save weight and volume. Synthetic fills are commonly made from crimped, curled, twisting or hollow fibres—sometimes all these techniques are used together. The basic idea is to reduce the weight of material and increase the volume of air that it captures.

Synthetic fill is made in sheets. How the fibres are connected or glued together can significantly affect insulation efficiency. While there are different methods, unfortunately there aren't any generic names used for them—instead there is a mass of trade names with each one claiming to be better than or superior to all the others. Some are lighter than others for the same insulation but from the information supplied it is impossible to tell which is better. Overall it is best to ignore such claims as it is more meaningful to look at the loft height and construction features.

The simplest synthetic sleeping bags consist of a single layer of fill sewn to either the inner or outer layer of the sleeping bag. (Both layers are not sewn through—as is done in traditional quilts—as this creates lines of cold spots.) This type of construction is not very efficient as it does not capture much additional air. The next improvement is to use two sheets of fill and sew one to the inner and one to the outer layer. In this survey this has been called double layer, quilted. In all bags of this type included, the stitch lines for each layer are offset to reduce heat loss. This is a slightly better construction method as although the layers will

often be in contact with each other there will also be a gap between them, capturing more air. Of course, this air gap is large, allowing the air to circulate, so it will only provide a small amount of additional insulation. Instead of using large sheets of insulation, the best method uses small sheets that are sewn together so that they overlap, creating numerous air pockets between the pieces. This is called shingle construction and is the most efficient method. Of course, as there is more work involved in constructing a sleeping bag in this way, they are generally more expensive. One other improvement is to add a radiant heat barrier: basically this is a reflective layer of shiny material that reflects radiant heat and is claimed to provide a ten per cent improvement—about a 3°C temperature gain. This is roughly half a season-rating:

helpful but not as significant as labels might indicate.

Another feature that will improve insulation is a neck muff, which reduces heat loss around the chest and neck. Zips can be a major source of heat loss so zip flaps are important. They must be at least as thick as the bag and wide enough to stay in place. An effective method to hold the flap in place is to stiffen it with extra material or tape—this serves the double purpose of reducing zip snags. Of course, more features mean more cost! Overall, you usually get what you pay for.



*The Black Wolf*

*Micron 3. Left, the Snowgum Micro Traveller is a light, two-season bag.*

outside material. This is a cheaper form of construction and will not be quite as warm as double-layer bags, which use two sheets of fill, one sewn to the inner and one to the outer. Shingle construction refers to smaller sheets of fill that are overlapped, like shingles on a roof, trapping more air.

### Total weight

All weights were supplied by the manufacturer and checked by the surveyor. The weight includes the stuff sack, as it is an essential item.

### Loft height

For the purpose of this survey, the surveyor measured loft height as the height of the top layer of the bag's chest area above the ground, to the closest centimetre. While this figure gives an indication of the general insulation, zip closures, neck muffs and internal construction also influence the overall insulation value.

### Compressed size

This is the size of the sleeping bag when packed into the stuff sack supplied, as measured by the surveyor. All of the stuff sacks had compression-straps, allowing the bags to be squashed down further. However, measurements given are for the packed bags when uncompressed, as although the bags look very small when the compression-straps are used, most users will struggle to get the sleeping bag into the stuff sack and will find it hard to compress it further.

### Outer fabric

Synthetic bags could be made from almost any material because the fill will not leak out, as is the worry with down. However, very fine materials are still used as they are very light and also reduce air movement, a prime consideration in keeping you warm. Nylon is the most popular material but there is little difference in performance between the materials used.

## Zips

All bags surveyed have twin sliders on the side zip, which is useful in warm conditions. Some sleeping bags with two zips only have single sliders on the foot zip: this is indicated as 2, S T in the table. In use there isn't a difference between having single and twin sliders on this.

## Surveyor's choice

As we are all different there isn't a single, ideal bag for everybody—more's the pity! In order to rate the sleeping bags, I grouped them into seasons. Within each season category I considered the loft height, total weight and price equally and ranked them according

## Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Canbee	Clipper	(02) 9698 8944
Coleman	Coleman Brands	1800 224 350
Denali	Anaconda	(03) 8720 4000
Hi Country	Aussie Disposals	(03) 9799 8888
Spinifex	Anaconda	(03) 8720 4000
Trailmaster	Sleepmaster	(03) 9875 1200

to what I considered the best value for bushwalkers' needs for weekend or long weekend trips. After establishing this base ranking I raised or lowered it by between half and one point according to the internal construction and minor features, as noted under comments. ●

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since the first issue. His favourite place is Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian States.

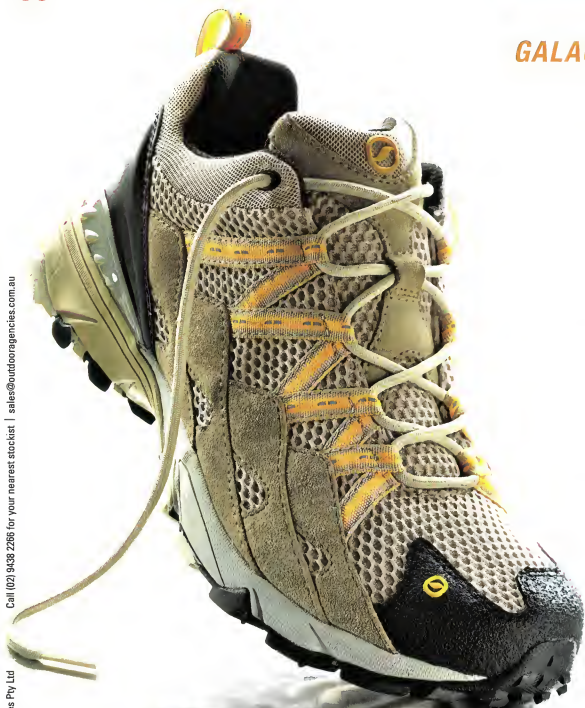
This survey was refereed by Chris Boake.

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06



## GALATIC

If you like running yourself ragged up and down the toughest trails, then the Galatic is SCARPA's answer to your needs. The Galatic is a trail-running and outdoor sports model with a mesh upper for keeping your feet cool. The dual density EVA offers excellent shock absorption in the foot's impact areas and stability is assured through STAB technology integrated with the anti-torsion system. These are just some of the features that will keep you glued to the ground in this light, dynamic and sleek-looking shoe. We also paid attention to the sole unit resulting in a low and grippy tread to keep you in better contact with the ground in all conditions. Finally, the "Speed Lacing" technology gives firm and fast lacing to hold your foot secure thanks to the wide laceloops that allow you to manage your lacing just how you want it.



# Seamless transition from night to day

For those who insist on sleeping outdoors without a tent or bivvy bag, night life is a little easier thanks to the clever technicians at **Mountain Hardwear**. Its range of expedition **down sleeping bags** has taped seams and use 'exclusive' water-shedding fabric, Conduit SL silk shell, with welded internal baffles to prevent 'incidental moisture' passing through: in effect it's waterproof. The zip and two laminated zip flaps protect two-way, locking sliders and the multibaffled hood and foot sections will keep the really important bits warm. The **Spectre SL** is a three-season, mummy-shaped bag weighing 1.25 kilograms, while the range also features the four-season **Banshee SL** (1.53 kilograms) and the fair-weather only **Spirit SL**, a meagre 1.16 kilograms. Contact **Mountain Hardwear Australia** on (07) 4114 4311. RRP \$699, \$799 and \$599, respectively.

US manufacturer **Western Mountaineering** is keen on super-light warmth, too. The **Hooded Aspen** sleeping bag claims to be a three-and-a-bit season sleeping bag weighing only 908 grams, 482 of which is 850+ goose down. It is a semi-rectangular bag with water-resistant 'MicroLite XP' shell fabric, full-length zips and a foot zip. Not to be outdone, the **HighLite** features the 'ExtremeLite XP' shell with a durable, water-

resistant coating and a half-length zip. The horizontal seams are sewn through but the vertical seams are divided by internal baffles to promote loft but reduce bulk—it is claimed to be highly compressible. A two- to three-season sleeping bag, the HighLite weighs less than half a kilogram and is stuffed with 227 grams of 850+ goose down. The bags are available in a number of sizes and distributed by **Paddy Pallin**. Contact them on 1800 805 398. RRP \$749 for the Hooded Aspen and \$549 for the HighLite.

**Vango** has produced a four-season sleeping bag so reasonably priced that you'll be able to buy a kilogram of bananas with what's left over. The mummy-shaped **Viper**

*The Western Mountaineering HighLite weighs less than 500 grams, living up to its name.*



contains 750 grams of 600+ 'power' down in a water-resistant, lightweight shell. Most of the down (450 grams) is on the top where it can loft and keep lofting, with only 300 grams of down in the base. For more information contact **Anso** on (03) 9471 1500. RRP \$369.

## Sweet feet

The **Ultimax Silver sock range** from **Wigwam** should keep your feet (and tent mates) happy. It's not Jason's Golden Fleece, but you can wrap your often neglected feet in precious metal. The patented moisture-control system is designed to keep your feet comfortable and the 'X-Static Silver Nylon' fibre, apparently derived from pure silver and inherently anti-microbial, naturally neutralises odours. The 'odour elimination technology' within the fibres is said to reduce the activity of odour-causing proteins and ammonia—this may, in turn, cure your tent mates' light-headedness and nausea. Socks are available in everything from thin liners to heavily cushioned models. Contact **Outdoor Agencies** for more information on (02) 9438 2266. RRP from \$28.95–\$44.95.

However, if you really want to spoil your feet, treat the fungus! According to pharmaceutical company **Novartis Consumer Healthcare**, almost 20 per cent of people have symptoms of **athlete's foot**. The treatment, **Lamsil Once** (guess how often you're s'posed to use it?), is a gel-like solution of ethanol alcohol and polymers that is said to form a film around the whole foot. The alcohol quickly evaporates and the film slowly releases the active ingredient,

terbinafine, for up to three days. (You're not supposed to wash your feet for the first 24 hours!) Traces of terbinafine have been identified in the 'stratum corneum'—which presumably means skin—for up to 13 days, as it continues to rid your feet of athlete's foot. As the name suggests, only one application is needed. Visit [www.novartis.com.au](http://www.novartis.com.au) for more details. RRP for a four gram dose is \$26.50.

Once you've taken the preceding steps, you can clean your sandals, boots and climbing shoes with **Paxton's Sandal Saver**, removing rank smells from your footwear forever! Derived from nontoxic castile soap with extracts of lavender, tea tree and eucalyptus, the powerful, all-natural cleaner will remove not only dirt but odour-causing bacteria that survived the earlier blitzkrieg. Contact **Spelean** on 1800 634 853. RRP \$14.95.

*Wigwam's Ultimax Silver range will make your feet more popular.*



## KNICK-KNACKS

### Wands, beams and light sabres

The LED Wand from Nite Ize is full of surprises. Although the Wand may not be sufficiently light-sabresque to re-enact *Star Wars* battle scenes, it's a very handy light source. With the wand case in place it becomes a safety marker, a beacon, a signal wand, a flare or strobe all in...two.

Contained within the handle of the wand is the light source—the LED Microlight—which doubles as a powerful spot beam and gives up to 15 hours of light per battery set (the red model uses one 2032 lithium battery; the blue, green, and white models use two 2016 batteries). The LED Wand is shock- and impact resistant, water-resistant to 300 metres, floats, and is visible for around two kilometres. The LED Wand is distributed by Zen Imports; contact them on (02) 9807 9922. RRP \$29.95 (batteries included).

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Brian Hughes on the summit of Mt. Oatleigh looking across to Mt. Nelson West along the Overland Track

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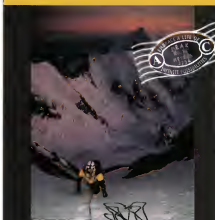
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### Blissful load carrying

The pack designers at Aam have been tweaking their Flow/Mo range of 'bodypacks', designed to tackle load-carrying differently. The new 30 and 33 litre models of the Natural Exhilaration are the latest in the New Zealand company's range. The Aam Flow-Motion harness features an 'auto-mould' frame and is

*Aam's Natural Exhilaration pack, with optional Balance Pockets, certainly looks different.*



said to allow for fine-tuning of the load, with Aam Compact Balance Pockets available separately, adding an extra seven litres capacity. The packs are totally waterproof due to the 'Waterproof Dri-liner' and even have an incorporated, closed-cell foam mat. The 500-denier Cordura Natural Exhilaration comes in two sizes and back lengths, weighing 1.2 and 1.27 kilograms, respectively. Aam bodypacks are distributed by Wildside Designs; contact them on (03) 5282 5654. RRP \$199.

## TRIX

### Flat mat?

**Davo Blair advises on how to make this expensive bit of kit last**

If your self-inflating sleeping mat has been deflated and rolled tightly for some time (such as when it's new) it can take a long time to inflate. Try letting some air in, closing the valve and then forcing the foam to expand by folding the mat into quarters (or eighths if it is really low) and sitting on it. The pressure of your weight will force the foam to expand. After a few seconds of this, reopen the valve and more air will rush in. Repeat the process if necessary, or sit on it while making dinner. This simple trick will reduce the need to blow warm, humid air into the mat and therefore reduce fungal growth.

*Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.*

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild* and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrana, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: [editorialadmin@wild.com.au](mailto:editorialadmin@wild.com.au)



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Rock Island Bend, Franklin River, TAS. The image that awakened and inspired a generation of conservationists.  
Photo: Peter Dombrovskis; Daintree Rainforest, QLD. Photo: The Wilderness Society Collection; Djarr Djarr wetlands,  
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# Tasmanian forests put to the mill

**Vica Bayley with the latest news from the proposed Gunns pulp mill and Ben Morrow's updates on logging battles**

Gunns Ltd has finally released the Integrated Impact Statement (IIS) for the proposed pulp mill in Tasmania's Tamar Valley, which confirms the worst fears of conservation groups such as the Wilderness Society (TWS). The IIS reveals that during the mill's first years of operation it will primarily be fed by native forests from north-east Tasmania and it will never be 100 per cent plantation-based. Despite this dependence on native forests, the IIS does not discuss the impact the mill will have on the wildlife, scenery and water catchments of Tasmania's north-east.

The IIS indicates that over 25 years the mill will consume more than 32 million tonnes of native forests. On top of this, export woodchipping will continue and large volumes of logs will still be exported as unprocessed woodchips from other mills in Tasmania. If the proposal goes ahead, the pulp mill will destroy about 2000 square kilometres (200 000 hectares) of native forests, largely in north-east Tasmania. Gunns' level of woodchipping in Tasmania will leap from the current amount of 4.4 million tonnes a year to nearly seven million tonnes. Magnificent hillsides and upper water catchments in areas like Ben Lomond, the Blue Tier, Great Western Tiers and the north-east highlands that deserve protection in their own right will instead be targeted for woodchipping.

An agreement has been signed that will sell millions of tonnes of Tasmania's public forests to Gunns, a private company already embroiled in controversy over its logging of old growth forests, its lawsuit against conservationists and its cosy relationship with the State Government. With mounting public concern over the pulp mill's demand for native-forest wood, this wood-supply agreement must be released. Tasmanians own the forests that will be locked into feeding the mill and continuing the ongoing woodchip exports under this long-term agreement. Tasmanians deserve full transparency on this issue, including knowing the price at which their timber will be sold.

The marine environment is also threatened with organochlorines—including extremely dangerous dioxins—that will be released into Bass Strait as part of the 30 billion litres of toxic effluent discharged from the pulp mill every year. Dioxins are difficult to detect and don't break down over time, leading to accumulation in marine life including fish, shellfish and marine mammals.

News on the IIS follows a report from CommSec (part of the Commonwealth Bank) that said Gunns' pulp mill would not be competitive, was 'fraught with risks' and a 'desperate' bid to find new

markets for woodchips. A media release from TWS also outlines direct, public subsidies to the mill including \$60 million from the Federal Government for the East Tamar Highway, described by the Forestry Minister as 'paving the way for the pulp mill'; \$6 million from the State Government to the Pulp Mill Task Force; and \$2.4 million from the Federal Government to Gunns for development of the mill.

In southern Tasmanian news, Ben Morrow reports that there were logging protests and arrests in forests on both sides of the World Heritage listed Snowy Range in May. In the Huon Valley four activists were arrested while attempting to stop the destruction of the Bamback catchment, a large, forested valley linking the Snowy Range and the Lower Weld Valley. After clear-felling these forests, their value for wildlife—in particular the wedge-tailed eagle—can't be replaced.

In the Styx Valley in the same week, Peter Firth's 51-day vigil at the top of a 75 metre *Eucalyptus regnans* came to an unexpected end when police abseiled from a helicopter to his tree platform. Along with Firth, two others were arrested during three months of sustained activities highlighting the ongoing destruction of old growth forests in the Styx. Within a week five more forest activists were arrested after 30 people oc-

cupied the rainforest atrium foyer of Forestry Tasmania in Hobart.

On 12 July Weld Valley activists locked down Southwood for the morning. This is the site proposed by the Tasmanian Government and Forestry Tasmania for a wood-fired power station to be fuelled with hundreds of thousands of tonnes of old growth forest. It is on the doorstep of the Lower Weld Valley and the forest furnace may be partly funded by federally issued renewable energy certificates. The government continues to refuse to provide details on this project.

The Weld Blockade has been in place since September 2005 and its flagship, a life-size (35 metre long) pirate ship called the 'Weld Ark', continues to protect ancient ecosystems from chainsaws and bulldozers. The Ark was built to block a proposed logging road into the Lower Weld Valley wilderness.

On a lighter note, the inaugural Weld Cup Final was held on Parliament Lawns in Hobart the day before the World Cup Final in Germany. This symbolic soccer match between the Old Boys Club and the Weld United Eagles received statewide coverage.

## ▲ Act now

*Tasmania's southern forests desperately need your help if they are to survive. To find out more, offer your support or make a donation, please visit [www.huon.org/weldvalley](http://www.huon.org/weldvalley) or [www.forestdefenceunit.org](http://www.forestdefenceunit.org) or contact [centre@huon.org](mailto:centre@huon.org)*

**Shiver me timbers: the 'Weld Ark' blocks a proposed logging road into the Lower Weld Valley.**  
Ben Morrow



# Thousands rally for forest protection

Saving Victoria's forests, by Gavan McFadzean and Luke Chamberlain

While World Environment Day brings attention to global environmental challenges such as climate change and whaling, this year's rally put the spotlight on a critical issue closer to home, the destruction of Victoria's irreplaceable old growth forests. On 4 June, 15 000 people hit Melbourne's streets calling for the end of woodchipping in Victoria's old growth forests, and protection for the forests, water catchments and endangered wildlife. They were joined by famous Australians including Jack Thompson, John Butler and 'Neighbours' stars, and Wurundjeri elder Joy Murphy-Wandin. The rally marked the beginning of a campaign by the Victorian Forest Alliance, a coalition of environment groups, in the lead up to the November State Election.

This rally was followed by another in Eden, southern New South Wales, on 2 July. Bus loads of people from as far away as Melbourne and north-

em NSW converged on the Japanese woodchipping giant Nippon Paper's woodchip mill, calling for it to be closed or, if necessary, source wood from plantations. The Nippon mill is predicted to have one of its biggest years in 2006, exporting more than a million tonnes of woodchips. According to the NSW Greens, Forests NSW has refused to release information about the prices paid by the Eden chip mill for native-forest wood, leading to allegations that it is being sold at well below market value.

This rally came just two months after the closure of what was once the largest sawmill in East Gippsland, the Austimbers mill just east of Orbost. (According to the winter *Potoroo Review*, the mill shut down on 15 May and its office, containing all records and computers, burnt down on 2 June.)

The loss of more local jobs is another sign that the native-forest logging industry is in terminal decline and is not the answer to local employment. Alternative industries in the region, especially those based on the protection rather than destruction of our native forests, need to be supported. Eastern Victoria contains some of the most spectacular and diverse forests in the country, yet there is very little government support for nature-based activities. Environment groups have plans to build a Wilderness Walking Track in East Gippsland, modelled on tracks such as the Milford Track in New Zealand and Western Australia's Bibbulmun Track, which would bring enormous benefits to the region.

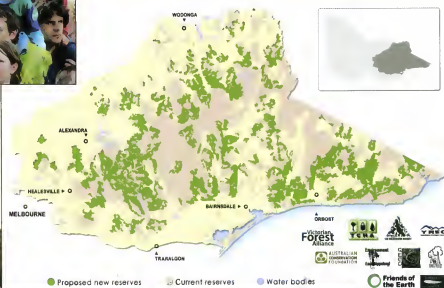
## ▲ Act now

To find out how you can help, call the Wilderness Society on (03) 9038 0888 or visit [www.voteenvironment.org.au](http://www.voteenvironment.org.au)



## Top and bottom, the Melbourne World Environment Day rally attracted more

than 15 000 people. Both photos Eli Greig. **Right**, the Victorian Forest Alliance's proposal for the protection of Victoria's old growth forest. The Wilderness Society



# The world's turning green(house)

**Tracey Cheeseman explains the effects of the proposed expansion of Victoria's Alcoa aluminium smelter**

The Victorian Government is facing a major test of its green credentials after Alcoa's proposed \$1 billion aluminium-smelter expansion. Alcoa, Australia's biggest aluminium producer, hopes to expand its Portland smelter to allow an increase in aluminium production from 360 000 tonnes to 500 000 tonnes a year. If approved, significant amounts of extra electricity will be needed. Alcoa's smelters, in Portland and Geelong, already use 15–20 per cent of Victoria's electricity and the company receives a government subsidy worth up to \$100 million annually towards this cost.

However, Alcoa's Victorian operations produce four times more greenhouse pollution

to proceed without increasing the State's greenhouse-gas emission levels.

## ▲ Act now

*To help make sure that the Victorian Government takes climate change seriously, join Environment Victoria's Climate Challenge campaign to put your MP in the hot seat. See [www.environmentvictoria.org.au](http://www.environmentvictoria.org.au) for details.*

## Moves in the right direction...

According to the *Age* on 23 and 24 June, draft plans for a mandatory national green-



than the worldwide standard for aluminium, with Australia's aluminium industry producing two-and-a-half times more pollution than the international average. If the expansion were powered by brown coal—which fires most of the State's electricity plants—it would significantly increase Victoria's total greenhouse-gas emissions. On a per capita basis, Victoria is already one of the worst greenhouse polluters in the developed world.

There is a way for the Alcoa expansion to proceed—creating jobs and boosting exports in the process—without increasing Victoria's greenhouse-gas pollution. If the Alcoa expansion were powered by gas and renewable energy it would reduce the potential increase in greenhouse pollution by at least half, and further requirements for Alcoa to invest in energy-saving measures at all its sites should be made. These steps, and the identification and taking up of other energy savings across Victoria, could allow the Alcoa expansion

house reporting scheme were released in June for a two-month public consultation period despite strong opposition from the Federal Government and industry groups. A decision on whether to introduce the scheme could be made by April next year, forcing Australia's biggest greenhouse-gas polluters to start publicly reporting their emissions.

Environment Victoria reports that in July the Victorian Government introduced legislation to ensure that at least ten per cent of the State's electricity comes from renewable sources by 2016, two-and-a-half times the current rate. This move, expected to pump billions of dollars of investment into renewable energy technology industries, was welcomed by environmental groups as a good first step. South Australia has also legislated for a 60 per cent cut in greenhouse emissions by 2050, while NSW and WA have set targets for significantly reducing emissions and/or promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency.

# Queensland's 'protected' rivers and rainforests

**Eli Greig reports that they may not be as safe as we thought**

A massive firebreak was carved through the centre of Fraser Island, Queensland, in May, destroying substantial areas of World Heritage listed rainforest and opening up new areas to easier four-wheel-drive access. The firebreak crosses several bushwalking tracks and could lead to a greatly diminished wilderness experience for walkers.

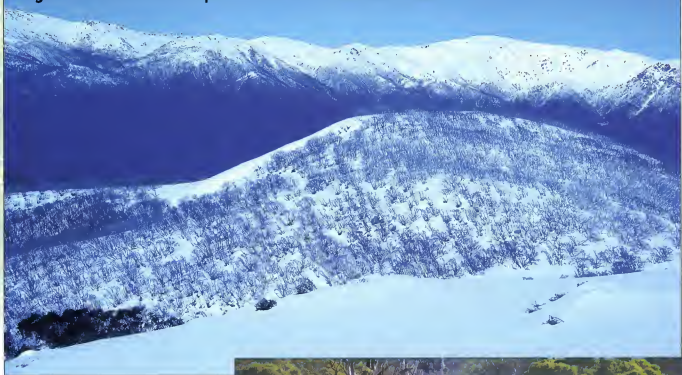
The Fraser Island Defenders Organisation (FIDO) has accused the Federal Government of failing to protect Fraser Island and questioned the current and future management plans for the world's largest sand island. John Sinclair, the president of FIDO, says that it does not make sense for Fraser Island to be on the National Estate Register and World Heritage list but not on the Commonwealth Heritage list. According to Sinclair, the area cleared is larger than the total area logged before the island was formally protected. The Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service claim that the firebreak is essential for ongoing management and maintenance of the island's environmental values.

A concerted and well-organised campaign aimed at undermining support for the Queensland *Wild Rivers Act* (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 96) is under way which could ultimately lead to demise of the legislation and the rivers themselves. Under pressure from agricultural and mining groups, Premier Peter Beattie is considering 'adjusting' the legislation to allow future mining activity in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Queensland Resources Council says it is willing to develop environmental safeguards so that it can mine near several northern rivers. The council's Michael Roche says: 'We have no problem with the identification of wild rivers. Our problem has always been that the current proposals impose blanket bans on legitimate economic activity associated with those rivers.'

But Murrando Yanner, from the region's Aboriginal land council, says stakeholders have a week to reach an agreement. 'The rivers do need protection', he said. 'Basically the whole intention of the legislation is that in 100 years these rivers are still there, that they don't look like the Murray River.'

# Kosciuszko—managed for nature or leisure?

Roger Lembit and others report on NSW environmental news



Roger Lembit reports that the NSW Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, announced his adoption of a new Plan of Management (PoM) for Kosciuszko National Park in June, highlighting the 'balance' that the plan seeks to achieve between protecting the park's significant natural features and its popularity for recreation. Debus claimed that this is the first Australian PoM to address the impacts of global warming. Funding for management of the park has been boosted, with plans to spend \$47 million over five years to fund actions in the PoM as part of a \$250 million 'Towards Centenary' programme to improve the park over the next 30 years.

Eli Greig reports that key spending under the plan includes \$40 million for the Penisher Range resorts to update infrastructure such as roads and water, and almost \$1.5 million to control feral animals and weeds. Environment groups have welcomed the focus on global warming and its potential impacts but have criticised the plan for being too focused on the interests of commercial ski fields and operators.

Conservation groups previously expressed concern about the amount of leeway given to high-impact recreational user groups such as horse riders and four-wheel drivers. They call for a retraction of proposed concessions to horse riders in particular was not accepted by the Minister. Andrew Cox reports that the PoM allows for the establishment of 14 drive-in horse camps, while expected bans for riding on off-track areas in the park didn't eventuate. However, in an important improve-



*A packed horse camp at Kosciuszko's Long Plain looks more like a showground than a national park! David Campbell. **Top**, looking across the burnt flanks of the Grey Mare Range towards the Main Range. Roger Lembit*

ment, a horse-riding permit system will be put in place.

The NSW National Parks Association (NPA) also points out that the plan allows accommodation to expand to cater for more than 10,000 overnight stays within the park's ski resorts. The NPA has declared that it will continue to seek:

- A funding package in which implementation of the plan's conservation actions are not tied to visitor fees.
- A World Heritage listed, tri-State alpine national park integrating the management of parks in the Australian Capital Territory, NSW and Victoria.
- The establishment of a standing scientific committee to provide independent advice on the threats facing the alpine parks.
- A reduction in recreational horse riding and the eradication of feral horses.
- Limits on overnight accommodation and associated theme-park-style facilities in the park.

In other NSW news, Andrew Cox reports that the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) has backed down to horse-riding lobby groups on a number of fronts. A new, statewide horse-riding policy removes rules preventing horse riding in sensitive areas and replaces it with a discretionary approach. Local NPWS staff will now be under more pressure to provide for horse riding, despite the well-known environmental impacts.

Following on from the Green Pages piece in *Wild* no 101, a total of 154 areas of NSW state forests are now open for recreational hunting, nominally for feral animals. This covers half of all NSW's state forests while in some areas, such as the south coast and the central west, closer to 90 per cent are af-



fects. Not only will it make these forests unsafe, environment groups claim that it will actually exacerbate feral animal problems.

In the spring session NSW Parliament will debate new legislation that will allow developers to seek approval for developments that may destroy areas of conservation value, in return for purchasing biodiversity credits obtained from some positive actions to assist biodiversity elsewhere. NSW environment groups are united in their opposition to the 'Biobanking' Bill and oppose a trading system that limits public consultation and can easily be compromised or bypassed. The NPA and others believe that conservation values should be protected in situ, with protection measures in perpetuity.

#### ▲ Act now

For further information about any of these topics, visit [www.npansw.org.au](http://www.npansw.org.au)

*The damage caused by a small number of horses crossing through a drainage line near the horse camps on Long Plain. Campbell*



## Woodchips

### Thirsty, trampled and treeless: the mighty Murray

The health of the Murray River remains in the spotlight, with the NSW Government announcing plans to buy between 80 and 125 giganlitres of water to return to the ailing river. The federal budget also allocated an extra \$500 million to help improve the environmental health of the Murray–Darling Basin with a target of returning 500 giganlitres of water a year to the river by 2009. However, a CSIRO report released on 19 May showed that by 2030 five times this amount of water, 2000 giganlitres, will be needed just to maintain current flows.

On 16 May the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that alleged logging breaches on the Murray near Tooleybuc, NSW, are being investigated. The clear-fell sites are said to cover more than two hectares. The NSW NPA said that the money allocated to improving the river's health will be wasted if the NSW Government continues to mismanage the red-gum forests along its banks.

A draft grazing strategy for the Victorian Riverine red-gum forests from Mildura to Yarrowonga has been leaked, according to the *Age* on 5 June. The report recommends that grazing on public land along the Murray be reduced or stopped, except where it could be environmentally beneficial. However, the draft strategy will probably be withheld until 2008, delaying any action.

### Devils and foxes

A group of scientists has warned that the Tasmanian devil facial-tumour disease could

dramatically alter the balance amongst other native and feral species in Tasmania. New research has confirmed a sharp drop in devil numbers due to the disease, which first appeared ten years ago, with devil population dropping by about 40 per cent across the State. In areas like Mt William National Park in the far north-east, the picture is even grimmer—the local population has decreased by approximately 80 per cent.

The demise of the devil population coincides with confirmation of a fox population in Tasmania. According to a new report there are definitely foxes in Tasmania, posing a multimillion dollar threat to the State's agricultural sector. The report's main author, Glenn Saunders, says that there is no doubt that a small fox population exists. Devils are thought to have been one of the main factors controlling the fox population (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 101).

### Western woodland 'protection'

TWS reports that in May large chunks of NSW's western woodland—including 'the best of' the Pilliga and Goonoo, and smaller forests such as Bebo and Terry Hie Hie—were given protection from logging. However, the areas weren't given national park status: instead, a new four-tiered tenure system called Community Conservation Areas was created. Although all zone types will be managed by the same body, Zones 1 and 2 are for protecting nature and Zones 3 and 4 are for administering logging and mining. For more information, visit [www.wilderness.org.au](http://www.wilderness.org.au)

### An election year in Victoria?

The Victorian State Government released close to 150 new environmental initiatives in July, costing almost \$200 million over the next four years. On 18 July the *Age* reported that these include a levy of at least ten cents on plastic bags from 2009, 12 recycling centres for chemicals and electronic equipment throughout the State, and a compulsory scheme forcing the 250 biggest energy and water users to audit their use.

### Basslink in action

According to the winter *Potoroo Review*, the 'giant underwater electrical umbilical cord' connecting Tasmania and Victoria was completed in April, allowing electricity to be purchased between the two States (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 89). Basslink was originally said to be economically viable, but with the price blowing out from \$500 million to about \$800 million, the Tasmanian Government has admitted that the project will run at a huge loss. Effects on the marine environment still have not been determined despite the marine monitoring system carried out as part of the approval system. Commercial fishermen in Gippsland have been issued with new anchors so as not to damage the cables, despite earlier assurances that they were 'safely buried' in the reef and seabed. Overhead pylons were constructed in Victoria after being declared safe but landholders are now being advised that fences running parallel to the cable could give off fatal electrical shocks. 🐼



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## Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks

by John Chapman, Monica Chapman and John Siseman (John Chapman, 2006, RRP \$34.95, [www.johnchapman.name](http://www.johnchapman.name)).

## Overland Track

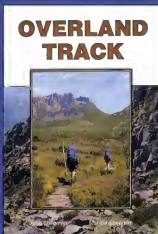
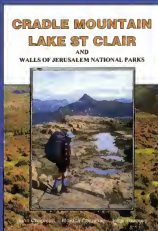
by John and Monica Chapman (John Chapman, 2006, RRP \$17.95, [www.johnchapman.name](http://www.johnchapman.name)).

The first book is the fifth edition of this popular guidebook. Some bushwalkers 'do' Tasmania's Overland Track and then don't return. However, after walking the track others are tempted to venture out into the country beyond and if they do so they are amply rewarded. A high camp in the Pelion Range or a walk across from the Walls of Jerusalem to the Overland Track via the Chinaman Plains and the Mountains of Jupiter are highlights of any bushwalking career. This book is very useful to those who want to do the Overland Track, which is thoroughly covered, and also to those who want to see a lot more.

The second book is much smaller in size and much easier to carry on a walk. It covers only the Overland Track and the popular side trips. However, I was disappointed to see that it omitted the very good sections on geology, animals and plants that are in the larger book. These are of interest to many first-time visitors to the Park. Both books lack information about campsites away from the huts—perhaps this was done at the request of the National Parks Service?

Both books are well illustrated with colour photos that certainly entice the reader to visit, clear maps (most at 1:50 000 scale) and gradient profiles, all of which have the same vertical and horizontal scales, making them useful for comparisons.

David Noble



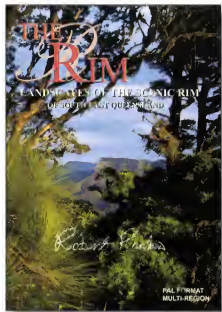
by the author himself. A list of other authors is provided at the back, along with a useful glossary. This book should appeal both to the novice and the more advanced nature photographer—it has already found a place on my bookshelf.

John Cooper

## The Rim DVD

by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 2006, RRP \$24.95, [www.rankin.com.au](http://www.rankin.com.au)).

Eleven short documentaries showcase some of Queensland's most stunning bushwalking destinations including the tough, 'all peaks route' on Mt Barney. Dialogue is supported by superb photography (as one expects from a Rankin production) and excellent portrayals of 'real people' tackling 'real walks'. Awesome flumes of water spilling over rainforest-clad escarpments are a reminder of wetter times in south-east Queensland.



## Exposing Nature

by Frank Greenaway (CSIRO Publishing, 2006, RRP \$49.95, [www.publish.csiro.au](http://www.publish.csiro.au)).

With the introduction of another book on nature photography, I was somewhat sceptical that it would cover much of the same. However, on reviewing *Exposing Nature: a Guide to Wildlife Photography* I was pleasantly surprised.

Although it includes many useful tips on technique, the author concentrates more on the natural history of the subject and the photographers' approach to it. A good cross-section of topics is covered including birds, mammals, insects, plants, reptiles and amphibians, as well as both film and digital technology. The text is supported by a selection of superb colour photographs, many taken



Whether you're an ardent bushwalker or an armchair wannabe, you'll be inspired by this widescreen equivalent of the 'coffee-table book'.

John Daly

## Tour of the Jungfrau Region

by Kev Reynolds (Cicerone Press, 2006, RRP \$44.95, [www.macstyle.com.au](http://www.macstyle.com.au)).

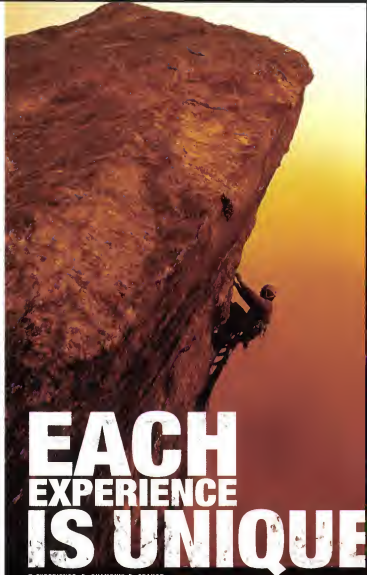
Like Reynolds' other excellent guidebooks, Jungfrau contains excellent track notes to a brilliant 107 kilometre walk, which Reynolds devised himself. The route traverses many of the valleys, villages and subalpine peaks of the Jungfrau region of central Switzerland, a world-famous mountain playground dominated by the soaring cliffs of the legendary



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Eiger. Fine views of stunning mountains and glaciers are a feature of this walk, highlighted in the guide by good-quality images. Of all the Cicerone guides I've used, the full-colour design of this latest offering is the cleanest and easiest to use. As well as track notes,



the guide provides background information on planning your walk, and comes complete with route cross-sections and simple colour maps, all held together with a sturdy plastic cover.

*Glenn van der Knijff*

## Tour of the Matterhorn

by Hilary Sharp (Cicerone Press, 2006,  
RRP \$44.95, [www.mactstyle.com.au](http://www.mactstyle.com.au)).

The Matterhorn, one of the most stunning mountains in the world, has drawn walkers to the Valais region of Switzerland for more than 100 years. Sharp, an experienced Alps walker and guidebook author, has packed this compact book with detailed track notes to the 145 kilometre circumnavigation of this great peak, describing a walk that offers outstanding views of the changing faces of the Matterhorn as well as grand vistas of other peaks and glaciers. This attractive guide is bound within a plastic cover, is well written and easy to use, and inside you'll find plenty of colour images, route cross-sections, basic colour maps, and information on planning to get you on your way.

*GvdK*



Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them, with RRP and a digital image of the cover for reproduction, to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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